

SUCCESS

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BY A. A. MILNE

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SUCCESS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE DAY'S PLAY
THE HOLIDAY ROUND
ONCE A WEEK
ONCE ON A TIME
NOT THAT IT MATTERS
IF I MAY
THE SUNNY SIDE
MR. PIM
THE RED HOUSE MYSTERY
FIRST PLAYS
SECOND PLAYS
THREE PLAYS

SUCCESS

BY A. A. MILNE

LONDON

CHATTO & WINDUS

1923

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THIS play was first produced at the Haymarket Theatre on June 21, 1923, with the following cast :

<i>The Rt. Hon. R. Selby Mannoek, M.P.</i>	-	-	-	-	CHARLES CHERRY.
<i>Lady Jane Mannoek</i>	-	-	-	-	GRACE LANE.
<i>Arthur Mannoek</i>	-	-	-	-	JOHN WILLIAMS.
<i>Freda Mannoek</i>	-	-	-	-	JOYCE KENNEDY.
<i>Digby</i>	-	-	-	-	EUGENE LEAHY.
<i>Edward Eversley</i>	-	-	-	-	HALLIWELL HOBBS.
<i>Bertie Capp</i>	-	-	-	-	REGINALD OWEN.
<i>John Reader</i>	-	-	-	-	REGINALD BACH.
<i>Lord Carchester</i>	-	-	-	-	ERIC STANLEY.
<i>Nite</i>	-	-	-	-	SYDNEY BROMLEY.
<i>Squier</i>	-	-	-	-	LEWIS SHAW.
<i>Buteus Maiden</i>	-	-	-	-	RITA SEYMOUR.
<i>Sally</i>	-	-	-	-	MOYNA MACGILL.

To whom, in acknowledgement of their enthusiasm, in admiration of their skill, and in gratitude for their friendship, I dedicate it.

Applications regarding Amateur Performances of this Play should be addressed to Samuel French, Ltd., 26 Southampton Street, Strand, W.C.2. Applications for other rights to Curtis Brown, Ltd., 6 Henrietta Street, W.C.2.

INTRODUCTION

ONCE upon a time there was an Author who wrote a story called *Money*.

The story was about a millionaire who had ten motors. On one very hot Sunday afternoon he ordered out his third chauffeur, was placed by him in the eighth car, and proceeded into the country in search of air. Having driven many miles, he was about to return to London for his dinner, when some slight accident happened to the engine of the car. The chauffeur, when asked what the devil he was up to, explained that the necessary repairs would occupy an hour ; and, in answer to a further question, regretted that he could not offer any supposition as to what the millionaire would be doing during that time. Fortunately, however, a means of occupation was at hand. The bells of a village church near-by rang out suddenly. The millionaire, remembering that he had not been inside a church since he was a boy, and eager to revive the old experience, joined the simple villagers who were trooping in. Now it happened that a new vicar had just come to that parish ; a young one, moreover, and eloquent. It happened also that he had chosen for his sermon this evening the text " Ye cannot serve God

and Mammon ” ; and in the course of his elucidation he referred with considerable passion and conviction to the story of the man who had great possessions. The millionaire, though seated in one of the pews convenient to the door, felt that the preacher’s eye was fixed upon him alone ; that the eye of every one in that congregation was upon him ; nay, for the first time in his life he felt that God’s eye was upon him, seeing into his dead soul. In a sudden fervour of fear and remorse, he told himself that it was not yet too late ; and, without waiting for the collection, he hurried from the church, climbed unassisted into his car, and was driven home to dinner. Over a bottle of port he sat for a long time, thinking. No, it was not yet too late. Miserable sinners, that’s what we all were. Selfishness, the curse of the age. But repentance ! What a beautiful word ! Yes, even now he could do what Christ had told that other man to do. Sell all he had and give to the poor. Yes, he would do it ! Feeling already a nobler and a better man, he threw away his cigar, walked firmly into his library, and wrote to his solicitor. This, that and the other stock—all that he had—was to be sold, and given to this, that and the other charity. He sealed the letter up and looked for a stamp. The gold stamp-box was empty. In a sudden anxiety he rang for his butler. “ Have any of you got a stamp, Roberts ? Just see, will you ? ” Roberts went away, and returned a little later with the news that unfortunately none of the staff seemed to have a stamp about them. “ B-but have you asked them all ? ” stammered the millionaire. “ All that are in, sir, with the exception of Alfred who has

gone to bed with neuralgia." In his excitement the millionaire took his butler by the arm and shook him. "Good God, wake him, man, wake him! Don't you understand? This is a matter of life and death!" Once more Roberts retired; once more returned. "Well?" said the millionaire hoarsely. "Alfred has no stamp either, sir." The millionaire dropped his head despairingly into his hands. "Then it's no good," he groaned. . . . Next morning his secretary came to him. "I found this letter in the library, sir. Do you wish it posted?" The millionaire took it in his hand and looked at it. And, as he looked, many expressions came and went upon his face; and to his secretary, watching, it seemed that just for one moment it was the face of a wistful child, but that the next moment it was the face of a man in hell. Then suddenly the millionaire laughed; a loud, bitter, contemptuous laugh; and, so laughing, tore the letter again and again, and tossed the fragments into the waste-paper basket.

* * * * *

Well, the Author wrote this ironic story, called *Money*, and it was read aloud to some who were by profession Dramatic Critics.

And the First Dramatic Critic said: "There are two vital objections to Mr. Smith's story. In the first place no millionaire would give away all his money as a result of one sermon; and, in the second place, if he wanted to, and couldn't post his letter on Sunday night, why on earth shouldn't he have posted it on Monday morning?"

The Author opened his mouth to say something, but could say nothing. He just sat gaping.

And the Second Dramatic Critic said : " Money is necessary in modern civilisation. Many rich men are also good men. To suppose that a man with a large bank-balance is necessarily inferior to a man with a small bank-balance is sheer sentimentality. Mr. Smith must try to clear his mind of cant. There is nothing wrong with money, dear Mr. Smith ; it was your millionaire who was all wrong."

The Author clutched his head in his hands, and said, " Good Lord, I'm going mad ! "

And the Third Dramatic Critic said : " Mr. Smith's artless little story, which tells how a country vicar went to bed early with neuralgia after preaching a spirited sermon on temperance, hardly calls for serious comment. But it is interesting to note that one of the characters, a millionaire, goes into his bathroom in order to write to his solicitor. Wouldn't he have found the library more convenient ? "

The Author jumped up indignantly, and shouted, " I say ! Look here——"

And the Fourth Dramatic Critic said : " Wasn't it more likely that the millionaire would have gone away for the week-end instead of staying in London ? And is there usually a collection at the evening service in a village church ? Also, why did he sit near the door ? It is almost certain that, being a stranger, and a prosperous one at that, he would have been shown to a seat near the pulpit. It seems a remarkable coincidence that, on the very day when his car broke down, this

particular sermon should have been preached ; and it verges on the incredible when we are asked to believe further that, on this day of all days, the gold stamp-box was also empty. The dragging in of Alfred was, of course, entirely unnecessary, and shows the weakness of Mr. Smith's technique."

The Author nodded to himself. "Of course ! It's a dream ! I shall wake up directly."

And the Fifth Dramatic Critic said : "Mr. Smith seems to be trying, very unsuccessfully, to wear the clothes of Mr. Brown. Surely he knows that only Mr. Brown is allowed to bring a church into his stories. If we want churches, we prefer to go to Mr. Brown for them."

And the Sixth Dramatic Critic said : "Any story with a solicitor in it always bores me dreadfully."

And the Seventh Dramatic Critic said : "I never pay any attention to a story which has a motor-car in it."

And so on, and so on, and so on. . . .

And the rest of the Dramatic Critics all shouted together. They said : "He calls his story *Money* ! Thank heaven, *this* won't bring him in any money. . . . *Money* ! That's all Mr. Smith thinks about. . . . *Money* ! Aren't you just a little too hopeful, Mr. Smith ? . . . *Money* ! How typical of Mr. Smith's private life ! . . . *Money* ! I *don't* think ! . . . No *Money* in it for Mr. Smith, thank God !"

The Author laughed suddenly. "After all, what *does* it matter ?" he said, and began to write another story.

* * * * *

Just such, with a few notable exceptions, were the criticisms of this play in the London press, when it was

produced at the Haymarket Theatre. To give an example :

In the dream scene between Mannock and Sally, he has protested that he will never hurt her again. She shakes her head at him, wondering at his innocence, and says, " Oh, my dear ! If you stop hurting me, I have stopped loving you." Mr. E. A. Baughan, thinking that " I *have* stopped loving you " is the same as " I *shall* stop loving you," wrote as follows in the *Daily News* :

" She loves and has always loved him, because he has the power to hurt her. I think she really meant that because she loves him he had that power. But a lady who leaves her room before breakfast in an afternoon frock must be forgiven want of precision. Evidently her long and hopeless love had unhinged her mind."

Mr. Baughan's lighter manner. Mr. John Francis Hope in the *New Age* was more serious—though he made the same mistake in grammar. He wrote :

" Mr. Milne is still in the sentimental stage about women. He makes his Sally betray his own ignorance of love when she says something to the effect that when Mannock stops hurting her she will cease loving him. That is pure masochism, not love, for love is sensitive to injury and dies of it. . . . Sally is shown only as a masochistic fool, that only a Neitzschean with a whip could possibly desire."

Of the two I prefer Mr. Hope. He, at any rate, is trying to be of assistance.

* * * * *

Consider, also, this strange business of the title. When I wrote this play, I felt that the only possible title for it was the ironic one, *Success*. I was warned by several people that it was dangerous to give the dramatic critics such an opportunity. I said that they were not like that, and was told that I did not know them. I said that, anyhow, only the absolute rag, tag and bobtail were like that, and was told that I did not know them. I said that they might be like that in the case of some cynically written, made-to-order piece, but not in the case of a play written from the heart—and was told that I did not know them.

I did not know them. . . .

It is, I think, a little curious, this difference between dramatic criticism and literary criticism. I could call a book *Success*, as Cunningham Grahame did once, and not a single literary critic would mind. No review would be headed "Not a Success," or "Success a Failure." It would never occur to any editor, sub-editor or reviewer to bother his head as to whether the book would succeed. It would be the book itself which mattered; nothing more, nothing less. But for some reason dramatic critics are surprisingly self-conscious about the success of a play which they are reviewing. I say "surprisingly." You would indeed be surprised if I told you how many of them said with a chuckle, "Success? Not likely!" and how many of them said with a sneer, "Success! That's all Mr. Milne thinks about now." A few years ago I published a book of essays called *Not that it Matters*. There were some reviewers who liked it less than others, but no reviewer

went to the title for a cheap jeer. If I wrote a play called *Not that it Matters*, a dozen dramatic critics would tell me joyfully that it certainly didn't matter as a paying proposition, and half-a-dozen would tell me primly, but equally gladly, that it certainly didn't matter as a work of art.

* * * * *

Well, I would ask of those who are now to read the play one kindness : I would ask them to let the play tell its own story, instead of inventing this for themselves as they go on. For instance : if Mannock seems to you in the First Act to be a lost soul, well, perhaps he *is* a lost soul. Why not ? Don't say to yourself, as has already been said : " Heroes of plays, particularly this author's heroes, are always ' nice.' Therefore this hero is nice. But he seems to be a cad. Therefore, either he is very badly drawn, or Mr. Milne doesn't know the difference between a cad and a gentleman." If, under the sudden sweet emotion of his dream, he breaks out into ardent declarations of love and remorse, don't say to yourself, " Scrooge. The man reformed by the dream. But what rubbish ! No man is reformed by one dream." Wait to see if he *is* reformed. And if it turns out that he is not reformed ; if all that the dream has done to him is to show himself to himself, just for a moment, as he really is, so that he cries out in agony, knowing that he has betrayed Sally a second time, " My God, there is nothing I can't do ! Nothing !"—then do not be in a hurry to say to yourself, " I suppose the author funked the Scrooge idea at the last moment ; he saw suddenly how ridiculous it was. A pity he didn't

realise it sooner." For it is just possible that he knew all the time what he was doing. Finally, if at the end of the play, you seem somehow to be feeling a little sorry for Mannock, don't say that this is false sentiment on *my* part. Tell yourself that you will always feel sorry for any poor devil who has made a mess of his life.

Here, indeed, is the one assumption which you may make safely : that the author feels that Mannock has made a mess of his life. Not because he was a politician ; not even because he succeeded as a politician ; but because—well, I will leave that to you.

SUCCESS

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

CHARACTERS

THE RT. HON. R. SELBY MANNOCK, M.P.
LADY JANE MANNOCK.
ARTHUR MANNOCK.
FREDA MANNOCK.
DIGBY.
EDWARD EVERSLEY.
BERTIE CAPP.
JOHN READER.
LORD CARCHESTER.
NITE.
SQUIER.
BUTEUS MAIDEN.
SALLY.

ACT I. Cavendish Square. Evening.

ACT II. Enderways, Yorkshire.

Scene 1 : Dick's Room. Midnight . . . and after.

Scene 2 : A Corner of the Wilderness. Early
Morning.

ACT III. Cavendish Square.

Scene 1 : Afternoon.

Scene 2 : Afternoon, two days later.

ACT I

ACT I

SCENE : *Cavendish Square. Evening. The MANNOCK family has finished with the grosser forms of eating, and is now dealing politely with the nuts and wine. It does this in what is called the library (though MANNOCK is not much of a reader), leaving the debris of the dinner, and the airs which cling to it, to the dining-room. The four of them, very clean, very proper, very safe, sit round the polished mahogany, cracking, munching, talking. SELBY MANNOCK, that rising young Cabinet Minister in the late forties, is intent on a particularly tiresome nut which won't declare itself. He deals with it methodically, his grave, handsome face showing no sign of anxiety. Probably he was human once, but now the official manner has descended on him. He can say things like "Ladies and Gentlemen, we have nailed our colours to the mast," or "Our glorious Empire on which the sun never sets," without feeling uncomfortable. He is obviously an important man ; not pompously so, but with the quiet assurance which only middle-aged politicians can bring to the pretence that any of us matters more to Heaven than another. There was a time when he had a conscience, but it gave up the struggle some years ago, and is now as departmental as his manner. LADY JANE, his wife, has the manner too. She was born in high politics, whereas MANNOCK has only acquired them.*

She still has the prettiness, though it is colder now, which, with her position and money, carried him off his feet twenty-five years ago, and replaced him a dozen rungs of the ladder ahead of his contemporaries. Her world is divided into people who matter at the moment, and people who don't; to the former she can be very pleasant indeed; to the latter also, if there is a chance of their mattering later on. On the other side of her is their only son ARTHUR, just down from the Varsity. At the moment he is rebellious, hating the manner as much as a Vicar's son hates the Litany. But it is doubtful if he has the moral backbone to fight against it for long. Success will have him for her own; let him make the most of his freedom meanwhile by denouncing the dishonesty of politics and the servitude of a career. At any rate he will amuse FREDa, his younger sister. She also will be successful—probably at St. Margaret's, possibly in the Abbey—but her sense of humour will do something to save her. Their leisurely, well-fed talk has been going on intermittently since the wine went round. . . .

ARTHUR (*suddenly, after a drink*). Well, all I can say is that, if that's the case, you ought to resign! (*He waits with an air, as if for the reporters to write "Sensation."*)

LADY JANE (*after a pause*). Nutcrackers, Arthur.

FREDa. Father's got them. (*Taking them from him*)
Here you are.

LADY JANE. Thank you.

ARTHUR (*trying again*). It's the only honest thing to do!

LADY JANE (*languidly*). You're very young, dear.
(*Crack!*)

ARTHUR. I suppose I ought to be crushed by that, Mother, but I'm afraid I'm not. I might just as well

say that Father's very middle-aged. That isn't the point.

FREDA. What *is* the point? I seem to have missed it. After you with the crackers, Mother.

ARTHUR. Honesty, even in politics, isn't a question of age. At least it oughtn't to be.

FREDA (*to* LADY JANE). Thanks. . . . It's a question of what you call honesty.

ARTHUR. Exactly! You have two standards; one for private life and one for public life. That's what I protest against.

FREDA. Exit protesting.

LADY JANE. My dear boy, what do you expect? It always has been so, and always will be.

ARTHUR (*aggressively*). Why?

LADY JANE. Don't ask *me*. Why does the sun go round the earth—

FREDA. It doesn't.

LADY JANE (*taken aback, but recovering gallantly*). Well then, why doesn't it? Why— (*with a wave of her hand*) Why anything? I don't know. You've got to take the world as you find it. When you're young, you think that you're going to make a wonderful new world of it, all by yourself. As you grow up, you realise that you can't, and that, as you haven't very long to be in it, you'll be happier if you make the best you can of the old world.

ARTHUR (*with an air*). Again I protest.

FREDA. Protesting's never any good. You want to break something.

(*And now, at last, SELBY MANNOCK has finished his nut.*)

MANNOCK (*wiping his mouth*). There! . . . What were you saying, Arthur? (*This is too much for ARTHUR, who, after one indignant look, drops into sulky silence.*)

FREDA *laughs*.) Ring the bell, will you, there's a good boy.

LADY JANE. What is it ?

(ARTHUR *slouches out of his chair and rings the bell*.)

MANNOCK. Thanks, old fellow. . . . Why don't I send in my resignation from the Cabinet ? Because my resignation would certainly be accepted.

LADY JANE (*to her son*). It's ridiculous, dear, to expect your Father to throw up his whole career just for nothing at all. What good would it do ?

FREDA (*with interest*). Would the P.M. accept it, Father ?

MANNOCK. I think undoubtedly.

FREDA. I thought that that was where Marjory came in. The Duke wouldn't allow it, would he ?

MANNOCK. He mightn't like it, but— In any case that isn't the point now. Arthur wants, not a mock resignation, but a real one. Why ?

ARTHUR (*mumbling*). The Redistribution Bill.

MANNOCK. Well ?

ARTHUR. You said that you thought it monstrous.

MANNOCK. Monstrous was *your* word.

LADY JANE. Your Father only said that he didn't like the Bill.

MANNOCK. And if you had given me time, Arthur, I should have added that I didn't like it because it didn't go far enough.

ARTHUR. Good Lord !

FREDA. It goes pretty far. It will dish Labour jolly well at the next election.

MANNOCK. Well, what am I in politics for at all, if not to do that ?

ARTHUR (*rudely*). You can fight fair, I suppose ?

MANNOCK (*calmly*). My dear Arthur, how on earth is

any one to say what distribution of seats is fair and what isn't?

ARTHUR. You admit that the Government wants redistribution just so as to improve its own electoral chances?

FREDA (*to her Mother*). Its own electoral chances— Arthur is getting quite the manner, isn't he?

(*But LADY JANE does not smile. She has been brought up on the manner.*)

MANNOCK. Certainly I admit it.

ARTHUR (*with a shrug*). Well!

MANNOCK. And I suppose *you* admit that Labour is opposing it just because it spoils *its* own electoral chances?

ARTHUR. Er—naturally—

MANNOCK (*with Arthur's shrug*). Well!

FREDA. Each for himself, and himself for—for himself. Our motto.

ARTHUR (*contemptuously*). Exactly.

MANNOCK. And rightly.

LADY JANE (*with conviction*). Certainly.

MANNOCK. *We* paint England Blue, and Labour comes and paints it Red, and the result is the Purple which suits her. But only if we have the courage to put our whole hearts into the True Blue. If we begin weakly dabbling on a sort of purply blue, what's the result? Not purple at all, but a dirty red. And nobody wants that.

LADY JANE (*interested*). Have you ever used that in the House, Richard? It's rather good.

MANNOCK (*doubtfully*). I don't think so. (*Trying to remember*) No, I don't think so. It would be better on the platform, I think. It isn't altogether sound.

LADY JANE. Sound enough.

MANNOCK. For the platform, yes. . . . Oh, Digby !

[DIGBY *the butler is there.*

DIGBY. Yes, sir ?

MANNOCK. Mr. Edward Eversley is coming in this evening. Show him in here.

DIGBY. Yes, sir.

MANNOCK. He'll probably have coffee.

DIGBY. Very good, sir. [*He goes out.*

MANNOCK (*to his wife*). I'm sorry, dear, I meant to have told you.

LADY JANE (*trying to place him*). Eversley. . . . Eversley.

MANNOCK. No, you don't know him. At least, you've met him, I suppose. He was at our wedding.

LADY JANE. Oh !

(*One gathers that many strange friends of her husband's youth were there.*)

MANNOCK. No, I'm not sure that he was.

LADY JANE. What does he do ? (*Not that it matters.*)

MANNOCK. He's become a great authority on gardens, I believe. Writes in the papers about them.

LADY JANE (*brightening*). Oh ! We might ask him down to Drayton. He could help us with the terraces. Mr. Ferris is so conventional—and so expensive. Not next week—the week after. No, that won't do, because— (*She tries to remember.*)

FREDA. Have you suddenly found him again, Father, or has he always been about ?

MANNOCK. I met him to-day at the Club. He was lunching with somebody. I hadn't seen him for twenty years. . . . More. . . . (*He is thoughtful.*)

FREDA. Twenty years ! Almost good enough for a dinner, I should have thought.

MANNOCK. He was only up from the country for a night. He hadn't got any clothes with him.

LADY JANE. I suppose he has some at home ?

MANNOCK. I imagine so.

LADY JANE. Then we'd better make it the 23rd. That's the Saturday.

ARTHUR (*aggressively*). Why shouldn't he dine in a tweed suit? And anyway, what's the difference between dining in a tweed suit and coming in after dinner in a tweed suit?

FREDA. About two hours, Arthur.

MANNOCK (*thoughtfully*). I hardly knew him at first. He's gone very grey.

FREDA. Was he your fag at school, or were you his? It's always one or the other.

MANNOCK. Neither. We were contemporaries. And we lived in the same village. He might be a year older. I forget now.

LADY JANE. Well, we'll leave you to talk about the old days together. Is there a Mrs. Eversley?

MANNOCK. Yes. In the country. There was a son, I believe. But that was twenty years ago. I don't know what's happened to him; we didn't get as far as that.

LADY JANE. I suppose she'd have to be asked. (*Hopefully*) Perhaps she's an invalid.

(DIGBY *opens the door and announces* EDWARD EVERSLEY. *He is the same age as MANNOCK, but looks older and greyer. A pleasant, kindly man, but with the absurd air of being a dear old gentleman. As boys together, MANNOCK was his hero, and even now there is something of that simple boyish admiration and love left in his eyes.*)

DIGBY. Mr. Eversley!

[*He goes out.*

MANNOCK (*getting up*). Good! You're just in time for a glass of port. Let me see, you have met my wife, haven't you?

EVERSLEY (*shaking hands*). How do you do ?

LADY JANE (*graciously*). How do you do ?

EVERSLEY. You will forgive my clothes, won't you ?
Dick explained to you how it was——

LADY JANE (*wondering who Dick is*). Dick ? . . . Oh, my husband, yes ! Of course !

(*She smiles pleasantly at him. After all, he is going to do the gardens at Drayton for nothing, and he may even be a constituent.*)

MANNOCK. My younger daughter, Freda. My son, Arthur. (*They bow and murmur to each other.*) Freda, you must make room for Mr. Eversley.

FREDA (*making room*). Come on, Mr. Eversley. We're longing to hear how you and Father robbed the apple orchard together, and were chased by the farmer, and thrashed by the headmaster, and all that sort of thing.

(*DIGBY and a parlourmaid have come in with coffee, and glasses for the visitor. The coffee is put in front of LADY JANE. DIGBY walks round the table with the port and fills EVERSLEY'S glass.*)

LADY JANE. Don't be ridiculous, Freda.

EVERSLEY (*sadly*). Alas, there are no such stories. We were model boys. Your father made a false quantity once—let me see, that would be in '88—but otherwise we gave no trouble at all. (*With a smile*) Eh, Dick ? (*He drinks his port.*)

MANNOCK (*without enthusiasm for the subject*). We were pretty ordinary boys, I expect. Cigars, Arthur.

LADY JANE (*handing him a cup*). For Freda. You'll have coffee ?

EVERSLEY. No, thank you.

ARTHUR. Cigar or cigarette ?

EVERSLEY. Neither, thank you.

ARTHUR. Father ?

MANNOCK (*taking one*). Thank you.

FREDA. Thank you, Arthur.

ARTHUR. Sorry. (*He holds out the box to her and takes one himself, and then goes back to his place.*)

LADY JANE. I hear you're a great authority on gardens.

EVERSLEY. I have a great love for gardens.

LADY JANE. Oh ! . . . But you do write about them ?

EVERSLEY. Oh yes, yes.

LADY JANE. How delightful ! Richard, Mr. Eversley must come down to Drayton—(*to EVERSLEY*) our house in Sussex—and see the gardens there. It would be nice, wouldn't it ? (*To EVERSLEY*) We've been making some alterations lately. We should value your opinion—and help.

EVERSLEY. That's very kind of you.

LADY JANE (*with a gesture of "Not at all"*). We must fix up a week-end. Mrs. Eversley too, if she would come. (*She waits hopefully for an announcement that the lady is bedridden, but EVERSLEY only bows.*) That will be nice.

FREDA. You'll like Drayton, it's terribly beautiful.

EVERSLEY. I'm sure I shall.

LADY JANE. You write a great deal, I expect ?

EVERSLEY. Well, yes, about things which interest me.

LADY JANE. And know all the editors. . . . Arthur wants to write. It's difficult at first, unless you know the people. A word in the right ear——

EVERSLEY. Ah, but which is the right ear ?

LADY JANE. Oh well, of course !

EVERSLEY. I think I should want to whisper a word in the ear of Mr. Arthur. "Trust to yourself. Never mind about introductions. They can't help you."

MANNOCK (*with authority, cigar in mouth*). Naturally,

you have to have it in you. Dickens would always be Dickens, that's true enough. But human nature being what it is. . . . pass the port, Arthur.

EVERSLEY. No more, thank you.

MANNOCK. And what of your own boy, Eversley? You have a son, haven't you?

EVERSLEY (*gently*). Yes, I have a son. I suppose I should say "I had a son." (*They all look elaborately unconcerned.*) He was killed in the war.

LADY JANE (*shocked*). Oh!

MANNOCK. My dear fellow, I beg your pardon.

EVERSLEY (*going on quietly*). But you know, we still say to ourselves, "We have a son." We still have—what made him our son—our love and our pride in him—and we have the sure knowledge that we shall see him again.

(*They look at each other, and away from each other, uncomfortably. Really, the man is being almost irreligious.*)

MANNOCK (*hastily*). Of course, of course!

FREDA. Was he in the Flying Corps?

EVERSLEY. At the end, yes. But he was in the infantry long enough for me to salute him.

[*They all look at him in amazement.*]

LADY JANE. To—to salute him?

EVERSLEY (*smiling*). Yes. You remember all those comic pictures at the time—the manager saluting his clerk—the father saluting his son. Well, we really did it. I was in his battalion, actually in his company, as a private when he was a second lieutenant. (*He beams at them proudly.*)

LADY JANE (*with a glance from him to her husband and back again*). But—but however old were you?

EVERSLEY. Oh, not too old in those days. I've aged since. And, you see, my boy was just a little under

the limit. So he borrowed two years from me, and that made us both quite happy.

(*Now you can almost see LADY JANE looking from that dead boy to her own son, and back again.*)

FREDA. Were you in France together?

EVERSLEY. In different parts of the line. But we managed to meet once or twice.

ARTHUR. *You* were in France?

EVERSLEY. Yes! Why not?

ARTHUR. Really in France? At the front? In the trenches?

EVERSLEY. Of course.

ARTHUR. And your boy. How old was he when war broke out?

MANNOCK (*knowing what is coming*). Arthur! (*To LADY JANE*) My dear!

ARTHUR. How old—

LADY JANE (*getting up*). How extraordinarily interesting, Mr. Eversley. But you and Richard must have a great deal to talk about with each other. (*They are all up now*) Freda! Arthur! You must bring Mr. Eversley upstairs before he goes, Richard.

MANNOCK. Of course. (*He is opening the door for her.*)

LADY JANE. Thank you. . . . Arthur! (*Reluctantly Arthur follows the ladies out.*)

(*As soon as they are alone EVERSLEY turns to his friend.*)

EVERSLEY. I say, may I smoke a pipe?

MANNOCK (*absently*). Of course!

EVERSLEY. Good! (*He fills it.*)

MANNOCK (*still absently*). We've taken to coming in here at the nuts and wine stage—an old custom of my wife's people.

EVERSLEY. They used to do it at Cambridge—the Dons. Oxford too, I suppose.

MANNOCK. Yes. . . . It's my room really. . . . (*Getting to the point*) What you were saying—about the Army—of course you were younger than I was—

EVERSLEY. One day—don't you remember? (MANNOCK *looks inquiringly at him*) Our birthdays? Mine was the day after yours.

MANNOCK. Oh, was that all? I knew you were younger. . . . You were lucky to be your own master—free to join up. I—I was—it was impossible.

EVERSLEY. My dear Dick, of course! You were an important member of the Government, running the war for us. I was just at your orders.

MANNOCK. It was my one regret that my—my responsibilities prevented me from shouldering a rifle with—with my friends.

EVERSLEY (*reflectively*). It's funny how people always talked about "shouldering" a rifle. You only shoulder arms in a Rifle Regiment. *We* sloped 'em. (*With a laugh*) There! That's about all of my soldiering that I remember now. Funny how it slips away.

MANNOCK (*still justifying himself*). Arthur was very anxious to run away from school. Naturally. So was every boy. He wasn't actually eighteen until the last summer. . . . The war was finishing then, and I . . . it seemed a pity, his last term . . . I arranged—

EVERSLEY (*helping him out*). Tell me about your children, Dick. Have I seen them all?

MANNOCK. There's my elder girl. Marjory.

EVERSLEY. Ah, what about *her*?

MANNOCK. She married young Robert Harlow.

EVERSLEY (*no wiser*). Oh!

MANNOCK. The Duke's second son, you know.

EVERSLEY. Oh! . . . I am afraid I am very ignorant. Is there only one Duke?

MANNOCK. In politics, at present, yes. Only one that matters.

EVERSLEY. Oh!

MANNOCK. It all helps.

EVERSLEY. Oh! (*With a smile*) But it's no good your trying to pretend that she married him just so as to help your political career, Dick.

MANNOCK. Not "just so" of course. She's keen on politics too. Young Harlow is in the House. It helps him to have married my daughter; it helps me that she married *him*.

EVERSLEY. Oh! (*After a pause*) Whom is Miss Freda marrying?

MANNOCK. She's only a child. There's nothing settled.

EVERSLEY. Is she keen on politics too?

MANNOCK. Naturally.

EVERSLEY. And the boy? He wants to write?

MANNOCK. Every young man of intelligence wants to write. He'll get over it.

EVERSLEY. Is he destined for politics too?

MANNOCK. Naturally the choice is his. But I imagine that that's what he will settle down to directly. He has great opportunities.

EVERSLEY. He has indeed. . . .

MANNOCK (*after a pause*). You only had the one boy?

EVERSLEY. Yes.

MANNOCK. A pity.

EVERSLEY. You believe in the large family, Dick?

MANNOCK (*cigar in mouth*). Three or possibly four, yes. Childless marriages in a country like ours—with our Empire, our responsibilities—well, where should we be in another hundred years?

EVERSLEY (*quietly*). We were very poor when we were first married. When my boy was born, we lived in two rooms. Mary was in one; I was in the other.

The walls are thin in those houses. I realised then that it was she who was saving the Empire, not I. It was not for me to say how many children we should have.

MANNOCK. Oh, come! A man can't escape his responsibilities like that.

EVERSLEY. Where were you, Dick, when your first child was born?

MANNOCK. Well, really! I don't know that— Let me see, what year would that be?

EVERSLEY (*to himself*). Ah, then you weren't in the other room.

MANNOCK. No, I was down in Liverpool; of course! My by-election was on. Yes, I remember now. I got a telegram the evening before polling-day. It was just in time. I used to tell Arthur that he won the seat for me. (*Blowing out smoke*) A little human touch like that helps enormously at election time.

EVERSLEY. I see. . . . But of course one can never be quite certain when an election is coming on.

MANNOCK (*taking it literally*). No.

EVERSLEY (*keeping the joke to himself*). Well, well, you haven't much to complain of, Dick. Cabinet Minister! Prime Minister one day, perhaps.

MANNOCK (*with a shrug*). It's just possible, I suppose.

EVERSLEY. Who would have guessed it in the old days?

MANNOCK. I've been lucky, of course. And my wife has helped me enormously.

EVERSLEY. I am sure she has.

MANNOCK. I couldn't have done it without her. It is difficult for an outsider, as I was in the early days. Of course it *has* been done, but only by very exceptional people, and I never claimed to be that. She knew everybody; introduced me to the right people; kept me in front of them. I suppose you would say that I played my cards well, but she dealt me the hand.

EVERSLEY (*to himself*). Yes, yes, I think I understand.

MANNOCK (*with a laugh at the absurdity of it*). In the old days, when we were boys, I used to think it was you who were going to do the big things.

EVERSLEY. No, no. It was always you. Don't you remember? It was always you who were Nite, and I was your Squier. Don't you remember?

MANNOCK (*remembering*). Yes, Nite, Squier and—Yes.

EVERSLEY. And Buteus Maiden.

MANNOCK (*he has never quite forgotten*). And Buteus Maiden.

(*They are silent for a little.*)

EVERSLEY (*humming to himself*). How did it go?

MANNOCK. The War Song of the—what was it?—

EVERSLEY. The Dreadnought Knight.

MANNOCK. Dreadnought?

EVERSLEY. Don't you remember? She said you were her Red Cross Knight, and I said you weren't a Cross, you were only a Nought—you were a Red Nought Knight.

MANNOCK. That's right. And I said—

EVERSLEY. No, *she* said—

MANNOCK. Yes. *She* said I was her Dreadnought Knight.

(*He is a little ashamed of all this, but for the first time you see something of that eager boy who died twenty-five years ago.*)

EVERSLEY (*humming again*). How did it go?

MANNOCK (*awkwardly; yet, in some unaccountable way, happy even to be singing it again*).

“Half a pound of tuppenny rice,

Half a pound of treacle,

That's the way the money goes—

Pop goes the weasel!”

EVERSLEY (*eagerly*). That's it!

MANNOCK. Do you remember how I said——

EVERSLEY. No, I said——

MANNOCK (*after thinking*). That's right. You said that you didn't like rice——

EVERSLEY. And I was always going to say "Half a pound of ham and eggs"——

MANNOCK. And I said that the Squier *always* had to sing the same song as the Nite——

EVERSLEY. And I said anyhow I would jolly well *think* ham and eggs——

MANNOCK (*very eagerly*). And *she* said—— (*He breaks off suddenly, and there is a little silence.*)

EVERSLEY (*gently*). Dick, have you—do you ever—have you ever seen Sally—well, I mean, since we——

MANNOCK (*in a low voice*). No. Not since——

EVERSLEY. That last summer?

MANNOCK (*shaking his head*). No. I went to London——

EVERSLEY. We both went to London.

MANNOCK. I had just been called.

EVERSLEY. I had just got a job in the City.

MANNOCK. Didn't *you* ever go down to Enderways again?

EVERSLEY. No.

MANNOCK. Why not?

EVERSLEY. I was afraid to.

MANNOCK. How do you mean?

EVERSLEY (*awkwardly*). I thought I—I thought you—— Of course, a little later, when I met Mary, I knew that I never had been really in love with Sally, but I thought I was then, and I thought you—it seemed to be understood. (*To himself*) You were her Dreadnought Knight.

MANNOCK (*with a self-conscious laugh*). Just a boy and girl romance. I—it was impossible. She—we had no

money. How could we? Better to make a clean sweep of it all, and begin again.

EVERSLEY (*to himself*). So you began again. . . . And gradually success closed in on you.

MANNOCK (*looking at him sharply*). What an extraordinary remark!

EVERSLEY (*surprised*). What?

MANNOCK. Success "closed in" on you.

EVERSLEY. Did I say that? (*With an embarrassed little laugh*) I beg your pardon. I had no idea. No idea even that I was thinking it. Ridiculous! (*After a pause*) She's married now, you know.

MANNOCK (*wishing to be done with the subject*). I'm glad.

EVERSLEY. But not very happily.

MANNOCK. Ah, I'm sorry about that. The Old Man's dead long ago, of course?

EVERSLEY. Of course.

MANNOCK (*with a laugh*). The Old Man. (*Tapping his head*) Never quite all there, was he?

EVERSLEY. I don't think that we used to say that when we were boys, Dick. Sally didn't.

MANNOCK. Of course! Her own father!

EVERSLEY. Unworldly. . . . Perhaps that's the same nowadays as not being quite all there.

MANNOCK. The two of them alone together all those years in that rambling old house!

EVERSLEY (*with a chuckle*). Hardly alone. We practically lived there in the holidays.

MANNOCK. What happened to the place?

EVERSLEY. She lives there still. That was all he left her, you know. I think she married to save it.

MANNOCK. It all seems very long ago.

(*They sit there silently thinking of the long ago.*

. . . FREDa comes in, followed by BERTIE CAPP,

a stout young man, who tries to hide his extreme cleverness beneath the make-up of a fool.)

FREDA. Here's Bertie, Father.

MANNOCK (*coming out of the past*). Hullo, Bertie. How are you ?

BERTIE (*dropping his eye-glass*). Pretty well, thanks.

FREDA. Don't go too close to him, he's covered with eucalyptus.

BERTIE. A precautionary measure only. The cold belongs to somebody else. My private microbes——

MANNOCK (*to EVERSLEY*). Do you know Bertie Capp ? . . . This is Mr. Eversley.

BERTIE. How are *you*, sir ?

EVERSLEY. How do you do ?

BERTIE. My private microbes, who distribute gout and insomnia, are resting for the moment. It's a hard life.

MANNOCK. How's the Prime Minister ?

BERTIE (*waving his handkerchief*). Like that.

FREDA (*with a face*). Oh, put it away, Bertie. I'd rather have the cold.

BERTIE. I give him two more days in bed. Between ourselves he likes it there.

FREDA (*to EVERSLEY*). Bertie is the P.M.'s P.P.S.

EVERSLEY (*with a smile*). Thank you very much.

FREDA. The Prime Minister's Principal Private Secretary. In other words, Bertie runs England.

BERTIE. I consult Miss Freda on all the important points.

MANNOCK (*to BERTIE*). Did you want to see me ?

BERTIE. Well—er——

FREDA. Come on; Mr. Eversley. We'll go upstairs.

EVERSLEY (*to MANNOCK*). Perhaps I'd better say good-bye, Dick.

MANNOCK (*carelessly*). Good-bye. I'll be seeing you

again before very long. Talk to my wife about that week-end.

EVERSLEY. Thank you, thank you. (*To BERTIE*) Good-night.

BERTIE. Good-night. (*He opens the door*) I hope I haven't given you the Prime Minister's cold.

EVERSLEY (*smiling*). It would be an honour to have it.

BERTIE. Oh well, he's nearly finished with it. Good-night. Good-night, Freda, if I don't see you again.

FREDA. Good-night. [*They go out.*]

BERTIE (*closing the door*). Is that the Garden Eversley?

MANNOCK (*surprised*). Yes. Do you know him?

BERTIE. I know his book, of course.

MANNOCK. Oh! (*With a faint touch of pride*) We were boys together.

BERTIE. He's a good bit older than you, isn't he?

MANNOCK (*hastily*). There was not much in it. Well?

BERTIE (*taking a large envelope from his pocket*). The Prime Minister's compliments, and would you rather have a Baronetcy or an absolute snip for the 2.30?

MANNOCK (*not surprised*). Ah! It's all right, then?

BERTIE. Very much all right. Between ourselves, it's a damn good speech. I read it to him. He just lay there, without a movement. Absorbed.

MANNOCK. Asleep, probably.

BERTIE (*candidly*). Well, so I thought at first. But I drank his medicine once by mistake—being a thirsty sort of speech, I had put a glass of water handy—and the subsequent noise woke him. I mean it was obvious he was awake all the time.

MANNOCK (*unamused*). Any comments?

BERTIE. Well, yes.

MANNOCK. What?

BERTIE. "Clever fellow, Mannoek. Er——"

MANNOCK. Go on.

BERTIE. "Clever fellow, Mannoek. He brings to the obvious such a wealth of reticence that it almost sounds improper." Said between coughs and grunts, you know, it sounded rather good. But I daresay there isn't much in it.

MANNOCK. You have to be obvious on the platform.

BERTIE. Oh, quite. . . . I say, do you see *The Sunday Socialist*?

MANNOCK (*curtly*). Never.

BERTIE (*taking it from his pocket*). You haven't seen this week's?

MANNOCK. Why should I?

BERTIE. We take it in, of course. "My attention has been drawn . . ." and all that sort of thing. (*Pointing to the place*) There! (*As MANNOCK reads*) I thought I'd better bring it along.

MANNOCK (*reading*). Yes. . . . Yes.

BERTIE. Once doesn't matter—you can deny anything once—but if he's going to make a habit of it—

MANNOCK (*firmly*). He is not. (*He goes on reading.*)

BERTIE. Well, I'll be getting along.

MANNOCK. Thanks very much for letting me see this. Are you going upstairs?

BERTIE. Just for a moment.

MANNOCK. Perhaps you wouldn't mind telling Arthur that I should like to see him.

BERTIE. Right. (*Going to the door*) By the way, where are you sleeping to-morrow night? Hotel?

MANNOCK (*still reading the paper*). Carchester's putting me up. He's got some sort of place in the neighbourhood, I believe.

BERTIE. Ah! I didn't know that you— (*He hesitates.*)

MANNOCK. We don't.

BERTIE (*tolerantly*). Oh, well, it takes all sorts to make a party.

MANNOCK. Exactly. This is politics. He's popular down there, they say. He's taking the chair at the evening meeting.

BERTIE. Oh, quite. Well, good-night and good luck.

MANNOCK. Good-night.

(*He settles down to this damnable article again.*

ARTHUR *comes in.*)

ARTHUR. Bertie said you wanted me.

MANNOCK (*getting up*). Yes; sit down, won't you? (ARTHUR *sits down*) Did you write this? (*He gives him the paper.*)

ARTHUR (*bracing himself for the row that's coming*). Yes.

MANNOCK. Ah! Proud of it?

ARTHUR. Not ashamed of it anyway.

MANNOCK. Then you ought to be.

ARTHUR. I don't see why.

MANNOCK. An inflammatory article in a revolutionary rag——

ARTHUR. Papers aren't rags just because you don't agree with their opinions.

MANNOCK. An impertinent article in a revolutionary rag, charging members of the Government, amongst them your own Father, with every sort of crime and folly.

ARTHUR (*calmly*). It just means that I take the opposite side to you, that's all.

MANNOCK (*reading*). "There is more here than political dishonour. There is personal dishonour."

ARTHUR (*uncomfortably*). Well—I mean——

MANNOCK. Thank you, Arthur.

ARTHUR. Well, it isn't *my* fault you're a Cabinet Minister. I happen to be a Socialist——

MANNOCK. A Socialist!

ARTHUR. Why not ?

MANNOCK (*contemptuously*). Why not ! Have another cigar ? Have another glass of port ? A Socialist ! Look at yourself in the glass !

ARTHUR. Well, you can't have it both ways. If I'm a poor, uneducated devil, you say contemptuously "Of course you're a Socialist ; you want my money," and if I happen to be well-off and educated, you say contemptuously, "You a Socialist ! Look at yourself in the glass !" You can't have it both ways.

MANNOCK. I beg your pardon. In fact, I'm not sure that I ought to be discussing this with you at all. This article (*tapping the paper*) is signed "Arthur Selby Mannock." I don't think I know him. Who is he ?

ARTHUR. That's not my fault. I suppose——

MANNOCK. Your name, I think, is Arthur James Mannock ? Why do you give a false name ?

ARTHUR. I signed it "Arthur Mannock." Of course it had this address on it. I suppose——

MANNOCK. You suppose that the editor, wishing everybody to know that a Cabinet Minister was being accused of personal dishonour by his own son, altered it to Selby Mannock so that there should be no chance of misapprehension.

ARTHUR. I suppose he thought it was a double-barrelled name. All the papers call you Selby Mannock as if it were.

MANNOCK (*quietly*). You know quite well why he did it. (ARTHUR *is silent*.) How many more of these articles are you writing—from my house ?

ARTHUR. Well—well, as a matter of fact, they've offered me a job, sort of assistant editor—two fifty—I could get rooms somewhere—I mean, naturally I want to. I mean——

MANNOCK (*with a sneer*). Assistant editor ! . . . As

assistant editor it would be your job to see that the "Selby" didn't go into your articles——

ARTHUR. Naturally——

MANNOCK. Or did go in, according as the editor wished.

ARTHUR. Well, of course I should—— (*His voice trails away.*)

(*They are silent. MANNOCK, realising that he is not getting much further, decides on a new line of attack.*)

MANNOCK (*with a friendly smile*). Look here, Arthur, let's talk this over reasonably.

ARTHUR. I shall be only too glad to.

MANNOCK (*charmingly*). Well, then, first, thank you for having kept your temper so well. I'm afraid I've been rather provocative.

ARTHUR. Oh, I say, not at all.

MANNOCK. I do say it. And that's the trouble, Arthur. You've got such a lot of fine qualities. Brains——more brains than I have, I fancy——

ARTHUR. Oh, rot!

MANNOCK. Enthusiasm, good temper, courage—— Well, I mean, how many young men would have dared to do that? (*He waves at the paper.*)

ARTHUR. Oh, I don't know.

MANNOCK. As the Prime Minister said to me the other day, "That boy of yours will go far." I know it. But in which direction? . . . It's a funny thing, Arthur, how so many great political geniuses, writers too, have started in the wrong direction. Disraeli began as a Radical, Gladstone as a Tory—— It almost seems as if one false start were necessary before you can get going. The trouble is that your enemies remember that false start, and bring it up against you. Happy the man who has no past, as somebody said. Well,

that's what I'm anxious about. You're preparing a past for yourself *now*. I wonder if— You don't mind my talking like this ?

ARTHUR (*interested and flattered*). Of course not.

MANNOCK. You're a Socialist. Right. I don't agree with your opinions, but that has nothing to do with it. Now what I'm wondering is— Need you be a *public* Socialist for—well, say for a year ?

ARTHUR. How do you mean ? (*With a laugh*) I shan't change in a year, if that's what you're hoping.

MANNOCK (*laughing too*). I'm afraid you won't. (*With an air of great seriousness*) But frankly, Arthur, old boy, I'm in a difficulty. I've been wanting to make a suggestion to you for some weeks now, only—I've been afraid.

ARTHUR. Afraid ?

MANNOCK. Yes, afraid of your refusing it. I've preferred to go on hoping, rather than to close the door on my hopes by speaking to you.

ARTHUR (*after waiting for him*). Well ?

MANNOCK. My secretary is leaving me. It puts me in rather an awkward position.

ARTHUR. Which of the many ?

MANNOCK. Well, naturally I don't mean at the Ministry. Reader. (*He jerks his head at the door behind him.*)

ARTHUR. Reader ? Why ?

MANNOCK. He's got a better job in prospect. He's been with me a long time, but he's leaving me at last. I shall be rather lost without him. Arthur, old boy, I wish you'd take his place.

ARTHUR (*staggered*). But—

MANNOCK. Three hundred a year I'll give you. Three fifty if you want to live out, but I'd rather you didn't.

ARTHUR. But I'm—my political opinions—

MANNOCK. I know, I know. That's why I was afraid to ask you. But couldn't you manage to keep an open mind for a year? I want you to see something of the inside of politics. If at the end of a year, you're more of a Socialist than ever, well, what a chance for you! You'll be able to expose us properly! You'll know all about us! But if I'm lucky enough to win your confidence, why perhaps one day the proudest moment of my life will come. Do you know what that will be?

ARTHUR. What?

MANNOCK. The moment when I introduce you to the Speaker in the House of Commons. Arthur Mannoek, M.P. for—— We can find you a dozen seats.

(They sit there, Arthur thinking, Mannoek watching him anxiously.)

ARTHUR *(after a pause)*. It's really awfully decent of you, Father.

MANNOCK. You see, I want you rather badly.

ARTHUR. You're sure it doesn't commit me to anything?

MANNOCK *(quickly)*. Not a bit.

ARTHUR. And if, after a year——

MANNOCK. Exactly.

ARTHUR. And you would absolve me of any charge of disloyalty, if——

MANNOCK. Of course! of course!

ARTHUR *(after thinking)*. Right you are, Father. I'll take it on.

(Mannoek turns away with a big sigh of relief.)

MANNOCK. Thank you, old boy. I'm sure you won't regret it. . . . Oh, there's just one other thing. I shall keep you pretty busy. Better take a holiday now, while Reader is still here.

ARTHUR. Well——

MANNOCK. Hard up?

ARTHUR (*smiling*). Fairly.

MANNOCK (*smiling*). I'll see to that.

ARTHUR. I say, you are a sportsman. Thanks awfully!

MANNOCK. That's all right. (*Dismissing him*) Well, I must go through my speech with Reader.

ARTHUR. That's to-morrow, isn't it? At Leeds.

MANNOCK. Yes.

ARTHUR (*smiling*). Well, entirely without prejudice to my political opinions, I hope they won't throw anything at you.

(*He goes. MANNOCK laughs heartily until the door closes. Then, in a flash, his pleasant manner disappears. He walks to his desk and picks up the telephone.*)

MANNOCK. Hullo! Come in, will you? (*He sits down and writes out a cheque. While he is so engaged, JOHN READER comes in, a serious young man with the great virtues of industry and loyalty, but a pathetic lack of anything else.*) Ah, Reader, just wait a moment. Got the speech?

READER. Yes, sir.

MANNOCK (*getting up, cheque in hand*). Good. All right?

READER. I have verified the dates and the extracts from other speeches. There was one misquotation from Wordsworth which I have corrected.

MANNOCK. I'm not sure that a misquotation isn't a good thing sometimes. Some fool is sure to write to the papers to point it out, and then one writes back and says that it's the fault of the reporter or the printer, and then the reporter writes and says—well, it's all publicity.

READER (*reproachfully*). You remember what *The Spectator* said last week—the one member of the

Cabinet who could be trusted not to bungle a literary quotation.

MANNOCK. Yes, well, that's something.

READER (*turning the pages*). One or two little angularities of style I have ventured to— Oh, and then there's this passage. This was not in the Prime Minister's draft—

MANNOCK (*looking over his shoulder*). No, it wasn't, was it?

READER. You seem to go some way beyond your colleagues. Of course it's not for me—

MANNOCK. Naturally.

READER. I just wanted to be sure that there was no mistake.

MANNOCK. There is no mistake, Reader—at present. It may be necessary for there to be one later on. I may find—later on—that I spoke from the wrong draft, in error. You understand?

READER. Quite so, sir. I thought I would just mention it.

MANNOCK. That's right. . . . And now, my dear fellow, I have something to tell you which I cannot flatter myself will be the distress to you that it is to me. The fact is that I am unable to avail myself of your services, your very great services, any longer.

READER (*utterly taken aback*). You mean that I—that you—

MANNOCK. I'm afraid so, Reader.

READER. But what have I—aren't you—

MANNOCK. Perfectly satisfied. Oh, it's not that at all. I can recommend you with the utmost confidence, and, in fact, I will make it my business to see that you are comfortably settled with some one else. But my son is very anxious to get an insight into politics, and I have been thinking that the best way—it has been in

my mind for some weeks, and he is delighted at the suggestion—the best way would be for him to take over your duties, and— (*Fingering the cheque*) In the circumstances, I have ventured to make this out for two months' salary, although I shall only require your services for one month longer. Here you are, my dear fellow.

READER (*mechanically*). That's very good of you, sir. . . . It's a little awkward—my wife—coming just now—she's not—she will be— (*Looking at the cheque*) Of course this is very generous of you—

MANNOCK. Not at all. I owe it to you. But you understand that I must think of my boy—it is his desire—

READER. Of course, sir. Naturally that comes first with you. I only wish—you see, just now my wife—

MANNOCK (*holding up his hand*). I don't think, Reader, that I can be expected— (*Reproachfully*) I can hardly be expected—

READER. No, no, of course not. . . . Coming just now—she will be frightened—

MANNOCK. I think that both of you will be distressing yourselves needlessly. There will be no difficulty whatever about finding you— I will speak to Mr. Capp to-morrow. Remind me. I fancy that Carfax—

LADY JANE *comes in*.

LADY JANE. Busy?

MANNOCK (*glad of the interruption*). Oh no, not at all. (*To* READER) Then that's understood. I will speak to-morrow to Mr. Capp. I think Carfax is the man. (*Taking the speech from him*) Thank you. Good-night, Reader.

READER (*a trifle dazed*). Good-night, sir. Good-night, Lady Jane.

LADY JANE. Good-night. (*He goes out.* LADY JANE *sits down gracefully.* MANNOCK *stands at the fireplace, turning over the pages of his speech*) Arthur tells me he's coming to you.

MANNOCK. Yes.

LADY JANE. I'm glad.

MANNOCK. You heard what he'd been doing?

LADY JANE. Yes. Silly boy.

MANNOCK. He didn't realise—and I didn't tell him.

LADY JANE. The least thing might make the difference now.

MANNOCK. Yes.

LADY JANE. Bertie tells me that C. J. is going to the Lords almost at once.

MANNOCK. I thought you knew.

LADY JANE. Not definitely. I suppose Mowbray will be Chancellor of the Exchequer?

MANNOCK. Sure to be.

LADY JANE. Bertie seemed to think it wasn't absolutely settled yet.

MANNOCK. The Duke doesn't like Mowbray, of course.

LADY JANE. No. . . . It's all been so sudden. We haven't had time to do anything.

MANNOCK. C. J. has been breaking up for months.

LADY JANE. Yes, but not publicly before. He might easily have lasted another year.

MANNOCK. Yes.

LADY JANE. Suppose it *is* Mowbray, who'll have the Admiralty? (MANNOCK *shrugs his shoulders.*) Would you take it?

MANNOCK (*not sure*). What do you think?

LADY JANE. No.

MANNOCK. Yes, that's what I feel.

LADY JANE. "Too devoted to your present work," and so on. That always sounds well with the public.

MANNOCK. Yes. (*They smile faintly at each other, and are silent, both thinking. . . .*) Eversley gone?

LADY JANE. Yes.

MANNOCK. What did you do about that week-end?

LADY JANE. Left it vague. Said I'd write.

MANNOCK (*relieved*). Ah! Then, in that case, I think perhaps—

LADY JANE. So do I. . . . It's always a mistake—trying to get back.

MANNOCK. Yes. . . . Bertie knew about him. The Garden Eversley.

LADY JANE (*surprised*). Oh? . . . Oh! (*meaning that, of course, that makes a difference*) . . . Oh, then perhaps—

MANNOCK (*shaking his head*). I think I would rather—He's a little disturbing.

LADY JANE. They always are—coming in suddenly from outside like that. Particularly when—

MANNOCK (*wishing to be fair*). He was the Vicar's son, I was the Doctor's.

LADY JANE. Oh, *then*, yes. . . . (*She gets up*) Shall I see you in the morning?

MANNOCK. I don't expect so. I have a fairly early train. There are the two meetings.

LADY JANE. Yes. . . . Leeds might make a difference.

MANNOCK. It might.

LADY JANE. I suppose Mowbray *is* a certainty?

MANNOCK (*with a shrug*). He may not last long.

LADY JANE. If only we had seen it coming. . . . Bertie doesn't think much of him.

MANNOCK. Bertie, no.

LADY JANE. Bertie counts for a good deal with the Prime Minister.

MANNOCK. Up to a point, yes. Not beyond.

LADY JANE. Still—(*she is silent for a little and then says*) I sometimes wonder if Freda—(*and is silent again*).

MANNOCK. It would help, of course.

LADY JANE. Yes. . . . Good-night. (*She holds up her cheek and he kisses it carelessly.*)

MANNOCK. Good-night. (*She goes out—to FREDA'S room, we may be sure.*)

(*MANNOCK glances at his speech, spreads it out on the desk beside him, puts on his glasses, and with a final glance at the opening, stands up and delivers it.*)

MANNOCK. Mr. Chairman, my lords, ladies and gentlemen. In coming before you to-night at this great crisis in our political affairs, when, not for the first time in her eventful history our country stands at the parting of the ways, I am conscious—(*He glances at the speech and corrects himself*)—I am not unconscious—I am not unconscious of a certain pride in the knowledge that it is before my own good friends of Yorkshire—my own people, as I must always think of them—that I am privileged to plead my cause. I was born on Yorkshire soil, I was nurtured through youth to early manhood in the bosom of your hills. Memories of my boyhood come back to me as I stand here to-night . . . memories of those happy days return to me (*And quite unexpectedly, just for a moment, they do. He breaks off, and says in a whisper*) Those happy days. . . . (*He is at Enderways now. There, armed to the teeth, march NITE and SQUIER; there, waiting to be rescued, sits the BUTEUS MAIDEN. Now it is DICK and TEDDY and SALLY. "Sally!" With a jerk he comes awake again, and hurries back to Leeds*) And so, ladies and gentlemen, in delivering my message to you to-night—speaking as I do, not only for myself, but for the Government which I have the honour to represent. . . . (*And so on. We can always read it in "The Times."*)

ACT II

ACT II

Enderways, Yorkshire

SCENE 1

It was known as Dick's room in the old days, so perhaps we may still call it that. For a small boy, home for his holidays, it was all very well, this exciting nest in the roof, but it is terrible to think that a Cabinet Minister is now expected to sleep there.

The room is empty at first, and in darkness. Then we hear a voice outside, and LORD CARCHESTER opens the door and puts the light on for us. So we get our one glimpse of him—Sally's husband; a big, easy-going, easy-moralled, rather battered man-of-the-world, who, as usual with him at this time of the night, has had just enough to drink and means to have one or two more.

CARCHESTER (*outside*). Wait a moment. I'd better go first and put the light on. (*He does so, and makes way for MANNOCK*) There you are.

MANNOCK (*coming in*). Thanks. (*He sees the room*) By Jove!

CARCHESTER (*for the tenth time*). I really do apologise, but Sally insisted on it.

MANNOCK (*impatiently*). My dear Carchester, of course! (*To himself*) Of course she did.

CARCHESTER. Said you would understand.

MANNOCK. I understand.

(He is still looking, looking at the room, drinking it in. The years are dropping off him.)

CARCHESTER. Never argue with a woman. I've learnt that—(*the man-of-the-world laughs*)—if I've learnt nothing else.

MANNOCK (*carelessly*). I shall be quite all right here, thanks. (*He wants to be alone with the memories of the room.*)

CARCHESTER (*sitting down on the bed*). Funny your turning out to be an old friend of Sally's like this.

MANNOCK. We were boy and girl together. I used to stay here in the holidays. (*With a deep sigh of remembrance*) This was my room.

CARCHESTER. Ah well, then, that accounts for it. Still, why not be comfortable in a decent room when you can? (*He sinks into somnolence, rousing himself a moment to say sleepily*) That was a damn good speech you made.

(*MANNOCK is not listening to his host ; it is the room which is calling to him. He goes quickly to the window, to the cupboard, finding, remembering, missing. Suddenly he bends down, and turns back a corner of the carpet.*)

MANNOCK. Hullo !

CARCHESTER (*waking up with a start*). What's the matter ?

MANNOCK (*accusingly*). There used to be a rat-hole here. It's been boarded up.

CARCHESTER. Good Lord, what do you do to rat-holes? (*He settles down to sleep again. But not for long.*)

MANNOCK (*severely*). That bed ought to be over here !

CARCHESTER (*dimly feeling that it is his fault*). I beg your pardon, I didn't—(*he tries to rise in apology, but sinks back again.*)

MANNOCK. Up against the wall.

(*He goes to the wall suddenly and taps ; a peculiar*

rhythmic series of taps, just above where the bed used to be.)

CARCHESTER. Hullo !

MANNOCK (*coming to himself with an apologetic laugh*).
Who sleeps there now ?

CARCHESTER. The staff. I dunno. P'raps it's the cook. (*Wagging his head in reproof*) Too old, Mannoek, my boy. Too stout.

(*MANNOCK turns away in disgust. Then he goes back to the wall, and begins to talk, looking at CARCHESTER, but seeing only himself as a boy, thirty-five years ago.*)

MANNOCK. That was the signal. That meant " I want to talk to you." Then we talked to each other through the wall. One tap for A, two for B, and so on, spelling out messages. Oh, for hours sometimes . . . just making up things to say . . . plans for to-morrow . . . wonderful plans for to-morrow . . . adventures which never quite happened. " G " meant " Good-bye "—if one sent it, the other had to stop and go to sleep. " G.D. " meant " Good-bye, dear "—that was when we had had a specially happy day together. Then, in the morning, the first one awake sent the signal. If the other one answered it, the first one sent " S.W. "—that meant " Shall we ? " Shall we get up ? " Y " for " Yes," and we'd race each other to be first down on that old broken wall in the Wilderness.

(*He stops ; he is racing to be first down ; SALLY'S door flies open ; she has the start of him. She can run—how she can run !—but he will catch her . . . CARCHESTER breaks in on his vision.*)

CARCHESTER. A damn good speech. (*He yawns*) And mind you, I know what I'm talking about, because I was awake practically all the time. (*He struggles to his feet*) I say, what about another spot of whisky ?

MANNOCK (*curtly*). No, thanks.

CARCHESTER. Just a little baby spot? You won't? Well, I will. Quite sure you're all right here?

MANNOCK. Yes, thanks.

CARCHESTER (*getting to the door*). Well then, g'night.

MANNOCK. Good-night.

CARCHESTER (*after thought*). G'night. (*He opens the door, and then turns round with the air of one having a message to deliver. He delivers it.*) G'night. (*He goes.*)

(MANNOCK is alone with his room; alone with a thousand ghosts, a thousand memories; most of them happy ones, bringing a smile to his face; all of them tearing at that solemn mask of success in which, for so many years, he has hidden himself. You can see the mask falling from him, you can see those years dropping away. . . .

He takes off his coat and waistcoat and puts on a dressing-gown; takes off his shoes and puts on bedroom slippers. Then he sits on the bed, still smiling at his thoughts. He swings his feet up and puts his head back on the pillows, looking up at the well-remembered ceiling. He gives a deep sigh, and just breathes the word "Sally!" Sleepily he puts his hand up to the wall and gives that rhythmic knock. There is no answer; it is the wrong wall; it was a thousand years ago. But, still sleepily, he taps out G.D., "Good-bye, dear, God be with you, dear." Then his hand, coming down from the wall, feels the electric switch. With the happy sigh of one on the very threshold of sleep, he turns off the light . . . and the thousand ghosts, who have been waiting for him, rush thronging into his dreams. . . .

* * * * *

*Listen ! Very faint, very far-off, a tune is coming—
the War Song of the Dreadnought Nite . . .*

Pom-perom-perompity-pom. . . .

Now it comes again, clearer, louder . . . Pom-perom-perompity-pom. . . .

Now the DREADNOUGHT NITE is here ; here too is his faithful SQUIER. . . . Pom-perom-perompity-pom. . . . A whole orchestra of sound.

Listen ! It is only a child's trumpet. . . . And—see !—there are the children. For it is light now, and we can see where we are. Yet, even so, we are not quite certain. For there is the bed with MANNOCK (is it ?) still lying there, but there also is that overgrown, tangled corner of the Wilderness, and the broken wall where DICK and SALLY used to meet.

“ Pom-perom-perompity-pom.” It is the faithful SQUIER who has the trumpet. NITE, in a paper cap, and with a martial sword in hand, leads the way. SQUIER, a toy gun hung round him, follows tooting. . . .

Enough, however, of toots. Let NITE give tongue.

NITE (*singing lustily*).

Half a pound of tuppenny rice,

Half a pound of treacle,

That's the way the money goes—

Pop goes the weasel !

Come on, Squier !

SQUIER. Half a pound of ham and eggs,

Half a pound of treacle—

That's the way—

NITE. That's *not* the way ! It's “ tuppenny rice.”

SQUIER (*reproachfully*). You know I *always* say ham and eggs, Nite !

NITE. Well, what's the good of being my Squier, if

you don't sing the same as me? Squiers *always* sing the same as Nites.

SQUIER. *Sally* said——

NITE (*seeing* MANNOCK). Hullo! Here's an old, dead gentleman.

SQUIER. Oughtn't I to salute him? (*He unslings his gun.*)

NITE (*sternly*). Wait till I give the order. Now then, Squier, shun! Shoulder—*arms*! (*SQUIER slopes*) That's not shouldering arms, stupid, that's sloping.

SQUIER. That's all the shouldering you'll get. (*Proudly*) We don't shoulder in *our* regiment.

NITE. Then you can jolly well take a month's notice, and I shall engage an entirely new Squier. (*SQUIER salutes, walks away a few paces and comes back again.*) Are you an entirely new Squier?

SQUIER (*saluting*). Yes.

NITE. Then I shall give you 350 a year.

SQUIER. 350 what?

NITE. Oh, I dunno. Stand easy. (*Kindly*) You can look at the old gentleman if you like.

SQUIER (*looking*). Is he a *very* old gentleman, Nite?

NITE. Not so tremendous. About 25 or 50 or something.

SQUIER. Is he dead?

NITE. Oh, a long time ago, I should think. Just as dead as dead.

SQUIER. Then I shall sing to him. (*Singing*) "Half a pound——"

MANNOCK (*sitting up*). I'm not dead. I've heard every word you've been saying.

NITE (*to SQUIER*). He says he isn't dead.

SQUIER. Ask him if he can sing.

NITE. Can you sing?

MANNOCK. Rather!

NITE. All right, sing !

MANNOCK. "Half a pound of tuppenny rice, half a pound of treacle——"

NITE (*triumphantly*). There you are, Squier !

SQUIER (*wistfully*). I always say "Ham and eggs."

MANNOCK (*shaking his head*). Wrong !

NITE. There you are, Squier !

SQUIER (*sadly*). I don't like rice.

MANNOCK. Ah, but wait till you try the tuppenny sort. Whew !

SQUIER. Is that a bit better ?

MANNOCK. Ever so much.

SQUIER. Oh ! (*Humbly*) Still, I think I'll go on saying ham and eggs, if you don't mind very much.

MANNOCK. Right !

NITE (*pointing to SQUIER's trumpet*). That's his loot, what he plays on.

SQUIER (*proudly*). I got it at the sack of Jerusalem.

NITE. When there's a sack on, there's always a lot of loots. Almost everybody gets one. I lost mine. (*Carelessly*) Don't mind, because a Nite has such a lot of fighting to do, he can't bother about loots. I say, where's the Buteus Maiden ?

MANNOCK. That's just what I was going to ask *you*.

SQUIER. I'm going to shout for her. Shall we shout for her, Nite ?

NITE. Yes, let's shout for her.

MANNOCK. All together. One, two, three—— *Buteus Maiden !*

NITE (*apologetically*). I don't expect she heard.

SQUIER. Perhaps she's being Sleeping Beauty, and is waiting for Nite to kiss her.

NITE (*rather hot and red*). Shut up, Squier.

MANNOCK. Well, I shall try calling "Sally."

NITE. Yes, let's call Sally.

ALL. Sally! Sally! Sally!

BUTEUS MAIDEN. Here I am!

(*And here she is. Only ten at the moment, but as sweet, as precious, as daintily dignified, as our Sally when she grew up.*)

NITE (*rushing to her—even then she was everything to him*). Oh, Sally, you *have* been a long time. We've found an old, dead gentleman to play with us.

MANNOCK (*indignantly*). I'm not dead! I'm not dead!

NITE. Yes, you are. Isn't he, Squier?

SQUIER. I thought he was at first. And then I thought p'raps he wasn't.

MANNOCK (*almost in tears*). I'm *not* dead. I shan't play if he says I'm dead.

MAIDEN. Do play! Then that will show you're not.

MANNOCK. I'm a very important, successful man.

SQUIER. I saw at once he was a very important, successful man, so that's what made me think he was all dead. (*Kindly*) But p'raps he isn't.

MANNOCK (*doggedly*). I'm *not* dead.

NITE. Yes, he is.

MAIDEN (*to NITE*). Dear, if he says he isn't dead, I don't think it would be kind not to believe him.

SQUIER. We can pretend he isn't, anyhow.

MAIDEN (*to NITE*). Please, dear.

NITE (*magnanimously*). All right, we'll pretend you're alive, and see how you get on.

MANNOCK (*humbly*). Thank you very much.

NITE (*moving him*). Now you just stand there, out of the way. What shall we be, Squier?

SQUIER. I think—I think——

NITE. I know! We'll be Three Suitors. Sally, you sit over there—— We'll be Three Suitors, Squier.

SQUIER (*wistfully*). I suppose I shan't be the *Third* Suitor?

NITE. No, I'll be—— (*Impatiently*) Sally, why don't——

MAIDEN (*sitting down*). Here I am, dear.

NITE (*to MANNOCK*). What would you like to be? You could be another Squier, if you like. (*SQUIER looks sadly at the Buteus Maiden.*)

MAIDEN (*gently*). There couldn't be more than one Squier, dear.

MANNOCK (*hopefully*). Could I be a Lord of High Degree?

NITE (*doubtfully, to MAIDEN*). Could he?

MANNOCK. I'm a Right Honourable, really.

NITE. That's an *awful* thing to be.

MANNOCK (*humbly*). Oh!

SQUIER. Couldn't he just be a wight or a varlet or something?

NITE. A wight of low renowne! A wight of low renowne! That's what he is. Isn't he, Sally?

MAIDEN. If you like, dear.

MANNOCK. Thank you very much.

NITE. Now, Squier goes first. We're all Suitors, and Squier goes first. Go on, Squier. (*In a whisper to MANNOCK*) You go next.

(*SQUIER slopes his gun, makes a long detour of the castle walls, and arrives at the Great Gate. He pulls an imaginary bell.*)

NITE. Bom! Bom! Bom! (*To MANNOCK*) That's the bell ringing inside to summon the aged Seneschal. Go on, Squier.

SQUIER. What ho, within!

NITE (*as Seneschal*). What ho, without!

SQUIER. Open the door, thou scurvy bald-pate!

NITE. What name, please?

SQUIER. Faithful Squier. I am come to pay attentions to thy mistress, the Buteus Maiden.

NITE. Not at home.

SQUIER. Have a care, agéd man, lest I carve thee to the brisket! (*He pushes past the SENESCHAL into the MAIDEN's presence.*)

MAIDEN (*turning to him*). Who seeks me?

SQUIER. It is I, thy faithful Squier, who loves thee.

MAIDEN. Alas!

SQUIER. If thou wilt wed with me, I will give thee a golden castle, two palfreys, a box of fireworks and—and—lots of things.

MAIDEN (*drooping*). I want none of these things.

SQUIER. Oh! . . . Not even a box of fireworks?

MAIDEN. No.

SQUIER. Oh! (*He salutes*) Good-bye! (*He retreats.*)

NITE. Well done, Squier!

(*SQUIER, rather pleased with himself, lies down and rests.*)

MAIDEN (*kindly*). Dear Squier. (*She resumes her character.*)

NITE (*to MANNOCK*). Now then, Low Renowne, it's your turn.

MANNOCK (*confidently*). Right! (*He marches up to the castle gate and pulls the bell. There is dead silence. He pulls it again. Still there is silence. He looks round, a little alarmed, at NITE*) This bell doesn't ring! (*NITE laughs loudly. MANNOCK rings it again, vigorously, but with no effect. He turns round to NITE again*) I say— (*But NITE and SQUIER have vanished. He calls out loudly, frightened*) I say! (*There is no answer. The BUTEUS MAIDEN still waits silent. MANNOCK suddenly drops the bell, and attempts to push his way into the castle, but DIGBY, the immaculate butler, bars the way.*)

DIGBY. Yes, sir?

MANNOCK. Open the door, thou scurvy bald-pate.

DIGBY (*coldly*). What name, please?

MANNOCK. Wight of Low Renowne.

DIGBY. Then it's no good your hanging about here. Only people of high renown, successful people, are allowed in *this* house.

MANNOCK. Have a care, agèd man, lest I carve thee to the brisket.

DIGBY (*calmly*). Those are my instructions. Her ladyship is not at home to *any* of her husband's old friends. Mr. Selby Mannock says he might perhaps give you a job in the garden, if you come round to the back door.

MANNOCK (*desperately*). But—but I've come to see the Buteus Maiden!

DIGBY (*contemptuously*). Dressed like that?

MANNOCK. You don't understand. I've just come up from the country for a day. (*He turns round*) Nite, how *can* I play this game if—— (*But NITE is not there; and when he turns back, DIGBY has vanished. He rings the bell again. ARTHUR appears.*)

ARTHUR. Name, please.

MANNOCK. Wight of Low Renowne.

ARTHUR (*coldly*). I don't think I know him. Who is he?

MANNOCK. I—I don't—— It was Nite, who——

ARTHUR. *Your* name, I think, is Richard Selby Mannock?

MANNOCK. Y—Yes.

ARTHUR. Then why do you give a false name? It only leads to misapprehension.

MANNOCK. I want to see the Buteus Maiden.

ARTHUR. Dressed like that?

MANNOCK. I—I——

ARTHUR. Look at yourself in the glass! A wight of low renowne! Have a glass of port! Have a cigar! A wight of low renowne!

MANNOCK (*turning round*). Nite! I can't get in!

People keep stopping me ! (*He turns back. ARTHUR has gone. He rings the bell. BERTIE CAPP is there.*)

BERTIE. Name, please.

MANNOCK. Selby Mannock—I mean Wight of Low—(*pathetically*) I don't know.

BERTIE. I thought perhaps it was the Chancellor of the Exchequer ?

MANNOCK. N—no, I don't think so.

BERTIE. What a pity ! Couldn't you work it somehow ? Pull a few strings ? Talk to the Duke ? Square an editor ? I'm sure, if you had a little time, you could think of something. Ask the Archbishop of Canterbury to dinner ! Invent a scandal about Mowbray ! Intrigue a bit ! Surely you can do *something* !

MANNOCK. I—I want to see the Buteus Maiden.

BERTIE. Dressed like that ? Without the Chancellor's robes ?

MANNOCK. I *must* speak to her ! I want to tell her—

BERTIE. You know, that was a damn good speech of yours. The Prime Minister knows what he is talking about, and he was awake practically all the time.

MANNOCK. Let me in ! I must get in !

BERTIE. I don't know what the Prime Minister will say. You see, Eversley—the Garden Eversley—has just given him a month's notice, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer— But, of course, if I were to marry Freda, we should keep it in the family. It all helps.

MANNOCK (*despairingly*). Nite, Squier, where are you ? (*He pulls the bell again. To his surprise it rings—or is it the BUTEUS MAIDEN saying "Bom, bom, bom" ? He takes a step forward, and is there at last—at her feet.*)

MAIDEN (*turning to him*). Who seeks me ?

MANNOCK. Er—er— (*but he can say nothing*).

MAIDEN (*leaning to him*). Tell me.

MANNOCK (*struggling desperately to tell her*). Er—er—

(*and behold! Reader, his secretary, is prompting him*)
Mr. Chairman, my lords, ladies and gentlemen!

MAIDEN (*turning away in disappointment*). Oh!

MANNOCK (*longing to say just the one word "Sally"—and then, "Sally, I love you!" but Reader won't have it*).

Mr. Chairman, my lords, ladies and gentlemen!

MAIDEN (*sadly*). Have you nothing more to say to me?

MANNOCK (*after another desperate struggle*). Mr. Chairman, my lords, ladies and gentlemen!

MAIDEN (*knowing that it is hopeless*). Alas! he hath a sickness!

(*And now, suddenly, NITE and SQUIER have him by the arms, and are leading him away.*)

NITE. *That's not the way, is it, Squier?*

SQUIER (*sadly*). I s'pose he *must* have been dead all the time.

NITE. *I'll show you! Now you watch me! (He walks bravely up to the BUTEUS MAIDEN. No door-bells, no parleyings for him.)* Buteus Maiden, I would speak with thee.

MAIDEN. Who seeks me?

NITE. It is I, thy love-lorn Nite.

MAIDEN (*wistfully*). What wouldst thou, Nite?

NITE. Fain would I marry thee.

MAIDEN. Ah!

NITE. No jewels do I bring thee; no golden palaces do I offer thee; only——

MAIDEN (*whispering*). Only——?

NITE. Only my love and my faithful service.

MAIDEN (*getting down off the wall and giving him her hand*). Then do I plight thee my troth.

(*He goes on one knee to her and kisses her hand. Then, her arm in his, he marches out of the castle, followed by the faithful SQUIER, who plays the War Song of the Dreadnought Nite.*)

MANNOCK (*as they go*). Don't go! Don't go! (*But they go*) Sally! Sally!

SQUIER (*popping back*). Tell her it's Dick calling. (*He hurries back after the others.*)

MANNOCK. Sally! Where are you? It's Dick! (*He goes from one side to the other, calling "Sally!" and then "It's Dick!" And as he comes back to the castle, there she is, sitting on the wall in just the same attitude as that child Sally—and as beautiful, as dear. Nineteen, twenty; and MANNOCK, seeing her, is himself no older, so eagerly his face lights up.*) Ah, Sally, Sally! (*At last he has found her again.*)

SALLY. Here I am, Dick.

MANNOCK. Where have you been? I've been looking for you.

SALLY. Just down by the river.

MANNOCK (*jealously*). What were you doing?

SALLY. Just sitting in the buttercups, looking at the river.

MANNOCK. Is that all?

SALLY (*nodding*). That's all, dear.

MANNOCK (*after a pause*). Did you look at yourself in the river, Sally?

SALLY (*nodding*). Yes.

MANNOCK (*with a deep sigh*). Oh, Sally! (*There is so much that he cannot say, that words cannot express. She cannot help him now. She waits, tremulous*) Sally, listen! (*She is listening. He taps the signal. She nods. Then he sends "I." She nods again*) Did you get that?

SALLY. Yes.

MANNOCK. What was it?

SALLY. "I."

MANNOCK. That's right. That's all the word.

SALLY (*to herself*). Dick.

MANNOCK. Listen! (*He taps "L." She nods.*)

SALLY (*so gently*). "L."

MANNOCK. That's right. (*He taps "O." She nods.*)

SALLY (*as gently*). "O."

MANNOCK. Yes. (*He taps "V." When he gets as far as "U," he pauses a moment, his hand up. SALLY is waiting breathlessly. With a smile he makes it "V"; out comes her deep sigh of relief; she laughs back at him.*)

SALLY (*nodding*). "V."

MANNOCK. Did you think it would be "V," Sally?

SALLY (*shyly*). I wondered if it might be "V."

MANNOCK (*tapping "E"*). There!

SALLY. "Love!" (*She looks straight in front of her seeing—who shall say what?*) "I love——"

MANNOCK. I haven't finished yet.

SALLY (*softly*). No, you haven't finished yet.

MANNOCK. Shall I do the alphabet backwards for this letter?

SALLY. Does it come at the end of the alphabet?

MANNOCK. It does come rather at the end, Sally.

SALLY (*with a deep sigh of happiness*). I think I'd like you to do it forward, Dick. (*Gently*) To make it longer.

MANNOCK. All right. (*He taps "Y."*)

(*Breathlessly, her chin up, her eyes all love, SALLY is counting.*)

SALLY (*certain now*). Ah!

MANNOCK. Did you know it would be "Y," Sally?

SALLY (*ever so softly*). I think I knew, Dick.

MANNOCK. Did you—did you want it to be "Y," Sally?

SALLY. Oh, I wanted it to be "Y"!

MANNOCK (*holding out his arms to her*). Oh, Sally, Sally, I love you! Could you . . . do you——

SALLY (*nodding*). Always, dearest, always.

MANNOCK. Sally!

(If it were real, he would have her in his arms now, but it is a dream, insubstantial. BERTIE and FREDA are there suddenly, between them. They each have an arm of MANNOCK'S, and are marching him away ; yet talking to each other across him, as if he were not there.)

BERTIE. As I said to the Prime Minister, the more these things are kept in the family, the better.

FREDA. That's just what Father said, when Marjory married Robert.

BERTIE. It will be useful for me, my wife being the Chancellor's daughter, and it will be useful for your Father, his daughter being married to the Prime Minister's secretary.

FREDA. Exactly, Bertie. It all helps.

(They have let go of MANNOCK, and are now arm-in-arm, but still talking as if he had never been there.)

BERTIE. In these days, we must stick together, or where are we ?

FREDA. Exactly ! Where are we ?

(And they are gone. But, alas ! SALLY is gone too.)

MANNOCK. Sally ! Where are you ?

(He hurries from one side to the other, calling for her. But it is EVERSLEY, as old as when we last saw him, who appears.)

MANNOCK *(turning round with a shout of welcome)*. Teddy !

EVERSLEY. I beg your pardon ?

MANNOCK *(coming closer)*. I'm sorry, sir—you looked much younger—I thought at first——

EVERSLEY *(smiling)*. Not at all. Very charming of you to think so. You live here, I suppose ?

MANNOCK *(charmingly boyish)*. I'm staying here.

Teddy and I stay here in the vac. sometimes. We're up at Cambridge. At least, we've just come down.

EVERSLEY (*smiling*). And what are you going to do?

MANNOCK. I'm going to the Bar. But—(*shyly*) I want to write.

EVERSLEY. Ah!

MANNOCK. You see, you don't get much money at the Bar, and I *must* have *some*, because you see—you see, Sally and I—we've just got engaged.

EVERSLEY. Oh, youth, youth! Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive. But to be young was very heaven!

MANNOCK. Only between ourselves, you know. We shan't tell anybody until I'm making a living.

EVERSLEY. I shan't say a word—except just to myself sometimes, "Bless them."

MANNOCK (*shyly*). I say, thanks awfully. Sally would love that.

EVERSLEY. Perhaps I shall be able to give you a hand later on. I write too. I daresay I could introduce you—a word in the right ear—

MANNOCK. I say, that's awfully decent of you. I don't suppose I'm much good. But it's fun. . . . It *is* fun, isn't it? I mean being alive . . . and trying . . . and wondering . . . and having somebody else who wonders too. . . . Oh, what a lot there is in the world that nobody knows anything about! All the lovely things! All the precious things! (*Ashamed suddenly*) I say, I'm awfully sorry—talking such rot—

EVERSLEY. Keep on looking for the lovely things. . . . And bless you both.

LADY JANE (*off*). Edward!

(MANNOCK *looks up at the voice.*)

EVERSLEY. There she is!

(LADY JANE *comes on in full evening dress.*)

LADY JANE. Ah, there you are, Edward!

(MANNOCK gazes at her, struggling with horrible memories.)

EVERSLEY. Here I am, my dear. (To MANNOCK) This is my wife, Lady Jane.

MANNOCK (to himself). His wife! (He draws a deep breath of relief) How do you do?

LADY JANE (casually). How do you do? Are we ready, Edward?

EVERSLEY. Yes, my dear.

(They turn and go off together, talking loudly to each other as if MANNOCK were not there.)

LADY JANE. Who is he?

EVERSLEY. Just a nice young man.

LADY JANE. He looks as if he had possibilities. Ask him to Drayton, if you like. He might do. (They are gone.)

MANNOCK (still looking for her). Sally, where are you?
. . . Sally!

(NITE and SQUIER march across, singing the Dread-nought war song.)

SQUIER (as they disappear). Say it's Dick calling.

MANNOCK. Sally! Where are you? It's Dick!

(And there she is, on her wall again, just as if she had never gone.)

SALLY. Here I am, dear.

MANNOCK (rushing to her). Oh, Sally, I've had the most awful dream! I dreamed—just for a moment—I was married to—to somebody else. It was horrible. And then I couldn't find you, and—Oh, Sally, it is you, isn't it? Say it's you.

SALLY (nodding). It is, dearest, it is. Never mind the dream.

MANNOCK. It couldn't happen, could it?

SALLY (trembling). Oh it couldn't, it couldn't. . . .
Oh, if it did!

MANNOCK (*comforting her*). It couldn't, Sally. It will always be you.

SALLY. It was always you. From the very first. Those dear, silly games we played as children—do you remember?—

MANNOCK. I remember.

SALLY. I think I *liked* Teddy better—(*doubtfully*) I think he was *nicer*, Dick—(*hurriedly*) Oh no, no, he wasn't—

MANNOCK. He was. I was a little beast.

SALLY. You weren't, you weren't. It was always you. . . . I loved Teddy; I love him now; it's sort of friendly, loving *him*. But you were different. It's sort of terrible, loving *you*, Dick. You're right in my heart, so twined that it can hardly beat without hurting me. You can't go now; not unless you tear my heart out too.

MANNOCK. I'm happy being in your heart.

SALLY. It was always you. I used to say to myself when we were children, "Squier's heaps nicer, *really*"—(*nodding*) Yes, he was—but Squier couldn't hurt me. Only you could hurt me. I think that was how I knew that I loved you.

MANNOCK. I won't hurt you, darling. Never again.

SALLY (*wistfully, wondering at his innocence*). Oh, my dear! . . . (*Very gently*) If you stop hurting me, I have stopped loving you.

MANNOCK (*softly*). I will stay in your heart.

SALLY (*putting her hands to her heart*). You are all that I have there.

(*They are silent together. . . . Very faintly the War Song of the Dreadnought Nite is heard.*)

SALLY *stands up.*)

SALLY. Come, dearest.

MANNOCK. I come, my beautiful.

SALLY. Into the world, for whatever the world may send, but always together.

MANNOCK. Always together, my lovely.

(They begin to move, but are held there. It is a deputation arriving. The War Song grows louder, as all the people of MANNOCK'S dream file in. Now they are between SALLY and her lover. She calls to him with her eyes, "Come, dearest," but he cannot. . . . She is gone.)

DIGBY. Oyez! Oyez! Oyez! The Chancellor of the Exchequer will now put on his robe of office.

(The deputation solemnly presents MANNOCK with the robe and departs with dignity.)

MANNOCK. Half a moment, Sally, I must just put this on. *(He struggles into it)* Sally! *(He looks up, still struggling. She is not there)* Wait a moment, Sally! *(He struggles)* Sally, I must get this on! Don't you understand, dear? . . . *(Frightened)* Sally! Wait for me! *(Desperately)* Sally! . . . Sally!—

(But he has lost her.)

ACT II

SCENE 2 : *A Corner of the Wilderness*

It is early morning, perhaps seven o'clock, in that corner of the Wilderness which we have already seen in MANNOCK'S dream. On the wall sits SALLY, LADY CARCHESTER, a woman in the forties now, but still our SALLY. MANNOCK, seeking the fresh air after a restless night, his dream still strong upon him, comes suddenly upon her.

MANNOCK (*with a shout*). Sally! Oh, my darling! (*And then he realises suddenly*) I beg your pardon! (*He is staggered at what he has said.*) I—I beg your pardon, Lady Carchester. Please forgive me.

SALLY (*smiling sadly*). It's all right.

MANNOCK. I'm really— What can you think? My only excuse—but I'm ashamed to give it.

SALLY. Please tell me.

MANNOCK (*with a laugh*). It's absurd. (*Then he tells her*) I dreamt last night—the most vivid, absurd—(*softly*) the most wonderful dream. You and I—here; first as children, then—afterwards. Sometimes I seemed to be looking on at myself; in some funny way there were two of me. Sometimes you were a child, sometimes you were grown up. But always it was you and I. Other people came in; everybody; you know how; but always you and I. Here. Just where you are sitting now—just where, just how, you always used to sit. . . . And then I woke up and came out here—it

was early, nobody else could be up—and there you were. Just as you always used to sit.

SALLY (*leaning back on her hands and nodding*). I understand.

MANNOCK. Don't! Don't!

SALLY. What?

MANNOCK (*in distress*). It's the Sally I used to know! Everything. The way she sits, the way she talks, the way she moves. Oh, Sally, don't! (*He recovers himself with an effort*) I beg your pardon.

SALLY (*smiling faintly*). It's all right.

MANNOCK (*trying not to look at her*). I've never had such a real dream. It almost seems as if you must have been dreaming it too. (*With an awkward laugh*) Were you?

SALLY. I have those dreams. (*Poor dear, it's all she has.*)

MANNOCK. I suppose it was being in that room again. (*With a laugh*) There are ghosts in that room, Lady Carchester.

SALLY. There are ghosts in every room—in every corner of the gardens—

MANNOCK. And here.

SALLY. And here. . . .

MANNOCK. It must be—how many years since we met?

SALLY. I don't know. . . . Did your speeches go off well?

MANNOCK. I think so. Yes. I don't know.

SALLY. I expect they did. . . . I'm sorry I wasn't up when you came. I went to bed early.

MANNOCK. We were late. Nearly midnight. I dined at the hotel, in between the speeches.

SALLY. I thought you would. . . . I thought you wouldn't mind if I was not up when you came.

MANNOCK. But you were. (*She turns to him*) In every

room—in every corner of the house. . . . I tapped on the wall—G.D. (*Gently to himself*) Good-bye, dear. That's "God be with you, dear."

SALLY (*softly*). I heard it.

(*And suddenly, the unearthly sweetness of his dream still with him, MANNOCK forgets that he is married, father of a family, an important and successful man; forgets that this is Lady Carchester. They are boy and girl still, just as in the dream. Is it too late?*)

MANNOCK. Sally, Sally, I love you! Oh, my beautiful, I've always loved you. It's too late now—I've thrown your love away—but I love you, I love you. Oh, just to say it again—I love you.

SALLY (*whispering to herself*). Oh, just to hear you say it again—"I love you."

MANNOCK. I've thrown them away—all the lovely things of life, all the precious things. I've thrown them away—for nothing. Oh, if you could forgive me—it's too late now, but if you could forgive me! I've hurt you, but I've hurt myself more, for it was always you. How can you forgive me? I tore myself out of your heart—you said that would hurt you, Sally—but if you could forgive!

SALLY. I forgive, dearest.

MANNOCK. Success! It closes in on you. That's what Teddy said. I tried to get free—I did try, Sally—but I couldn't. It had got me. It closes in on you.

SALLY. I understand, dearest.

MANNOCK. Oh, but just to say "I love you, Sally," again!

SALLY. Oh, just to hear you say it, dearest.

MANNOCK (*timidly*). I suppose you couldn't say "I love you, Dick." Oh no, how can I ask it?

SALLY. "If you stop hurting me, I have stopped loving you"—do you remember?

MANNOCK (*remorsefully*). Sally!

SALLY (*her hand to her heart*). It has never stopped hurting . . . I had to make something of my life. To sit alone with Pain—(*she shakes her head*) I had to make something of it. But it has never stopped hurting.

MANNOCK. Oh, my dear! Forgive me.

SALLY. It is early. We are alone with the world. This is part of the dream—you and I. And so—I love you, Dick.

MANNOCK (*humbly*). Thank you, Sally.

SALLY (*giving him her hand*). It is part of the dream. (*They are hand in hand—silent.*)

MANNOCK (*quietly*). Need it be a dream? There is so much in the world that nobody knows anything about—is it too late to find it together?

SALLY (*trembling*). It is only part of the dream, dearest.

MANNOCK (*earnestly*). Need it be? Here we are, you and I—need it be a dream?

SALLY (*how she loves him*). Your career.

MANNOCK (*bitterly*). My career! My successful career! (*He tears it away*) Let me get away from it! Help me to get away from it! It is not too late. Come with me, my beautiful.

SALLY (*her last defence*). It means giving up everything.

MANNOCK (*triumphantly*). It means finding everything. . . .

SALLY (*quietly*). I have always loved you. From the first—from the very first. It was always you. It is you now. If you want me—if you think it is not too late—if it would be better for you—(*she breaks off, and then begins again*) I don't know if it's wrong. I don't

know much about Right and Wrong. But I think, perhaps, that there are some wrongs which are better and braver than Right, and some rights which are worse and more destroying than Wrong. . . . It is only of you I am thinking. If it would be better for you—*(she breaks off again, and then nods gently to herself)* I will come with you, dearest.

MANNOCK. Sally, my lovely one! *(He holds out his hands to her; she takes them)* But you *want* to come? You do love me still—after all I've done to you? Say "I love you, Dick."

SALLY *(from her broken heart)*. God knows how I love you, Dick.

MANNOCK. Oh, my dear, my dear! *(He kisses her hands reverently, and is silent for a little. Then, thinking it out slowly, now for the first time seeing the thing as it is, he says)* Now then, you must give me a week, a week to get out of it all, a week to get clear. Sally, you *do* see, don't you? I can't only think of myself—now. Not now. That was the old way—only myself—my success—my career—but now! I must get out of it all first. I must have a week—to get clear.

SALLY *(perhaps she guesses)*. You must have a week—to be certain.

MANNOCK *(confidently)*. Oh, I'm certain enough. *(He laughs happily.)*

SALLY. Yet I want you to have a week. Not seeing me, not writing to me. I can do nothing for you now, dear. It is for you. . . . Here am I. If, at the end of a week, you want me, tell me where you want me, and I will come.

MANNOCK. There is a place I've seen, a little sleepy village between hills; you will feel at rest there. Nobody comes, nobody will know us. When we are there together, then I will try to thank you.

SALLY (*seeing it then, if never afterwards*). I will wait for you to say "Come!"

MANNOCK (*nodding*). A week. Only a week. (*He makes a movement as if to go ; she too*). No, don't move! Let me have this picture of you for our last week away from each other. . . . Hands behind you in that way you always had. There! Sally the child, Sally the girl, Sally the woman—and always my beloved. (*Clasping his hands to her*) Oh, my lovely!

(*He is gone ; she waits there. So it was twenty-five years ago. So it is now.*)

ACT III

ACT III

SCENE 1 : *Cavendish Square*

It is the afternoon of the same day. BERTIE, ushered in by DIGBY, comes into the empty library. He has just been told that MR. MANNOCK is not yet home.

BERTIE (*looking at his watch*). I suppose the train was late.

DIGBY. No, sir, apparently not. The car has returned with Mr. Mannock's dressing-case.

BERTIE. Then where——

DIGBY. I understand from Lawson that Mr. Mannock gave instructions that he would be walking home.

BERTIE (*amazed*). Walking! Why?

DIGBY. Naturally I can't say, sir, except that it is a fine afternoon, and that Mr. Mannock may have felt in good spirits.

BERTIE. Good spirits! Good Lord!

DIGBY. Yes, sir. Even if he walked all the way he should be here very soon now, sir. Of course, if he popped on to a 'bus——

BERTIE. My good Digby, you can't pop on to a 'bus without years of practice. If he has taken his life in his hands like that, he may be at Crouch End, or God knows where, by now. Well, I shall wait, if I wait all day.

DIGBY. Yes, sir.

BERTIE. Tell her ladyship I'm here.

DIGBY. Very good, sir.

(*He goes out.* BERTIE *sits down with a paper and waits.* FREDA *comes in.*)

FREDA. Hullo, Bertie.

BERTIE (*getting up and taking her hand*). Hullo, Freda. (*Petulantly*) Why on earth do you let your Father dash off to Cricklewood like this?

FREDA. Is that where he is?

BERTIE. I don't know. Oh, confound their knavish tricks!

FREDA (*surprised*). Bertie, you're quite ruffled.

BERTIE. I've had a ruffling morning.

FREDA. Bobo a trifle tetchy?

BERTIE. If you are referring to the Prime Minister—

FREDA. I am.

BERTIE. The answer is in the affirmative. "Tetchy," perhaps, hardly does it justice.

FREDA. How very grim for you.

BERTIE. Oh, I shall survive.

FREDA. I'm sure you will. You're the surviving sort. (*She sits down.*)

BERTIE (*thoughtfully*). Now I wonder if that's a compliment or not. (*He sits down too.*)

FREDA. Well, I shouldn't have much use for anybody who wasn't a survivor.

BERTIE. Ah, then it *is* a compliment.

FREDA. Of course it is.

BERTIE (*tentatively*). But if he *were* a survivor, if he very distinctly were, then you—you could imagine yourself having some slight use for him?

FREDA (*demurely*). You might go as far as that, Mr. Capp—quite unofficially.

BERTIE. Yes. . . . I'm forty. I just mention it.

FREDA. I'm nineteen. I just throw it out.

BERTIE. In a mid-Victorian novel I should point out sadly that I was old enough to be your father.

FREDA. And in a modern novel I should agree that, if you had married at twenty, and got to work at once, you might just have done it.

BERTIE (*after a pause*). Did I tell you that my Uncle Joseph died the other day?

FREDA. No. . . . My sister's small baby has just been vaccinated.

BERTIE (*reproachfully*). He was the rich one, you know.

FREDA. Oh, I beg his pardon! (*Tactfully*) Did he—was his mind clear at the last?

BERTIE. Perfectly, I'm glad to say.

FREDA. How clear?

BERTIE. About a hundred and twenty thousand.

FREDA (*delighted*). Bertie, what a brain!

BERTIE (*looking at her proudly*). You know, every now and then, you're just like the Freda of ten years ago, who used to sit on my knee and try to wear my eye-glass.

FREDA. My dear Bertie, surely I've sat on your knee since then!

BERTIE. Not so systematically.

FREDA (*sitting on it and wearing his eye-glass*). But how absurd to let these old customs die out. (*After a pause*) Have you actually proposed to me yet?

BERTIE (*with dignity*). I am just going to.

FREDA. I don't want to hurry you.

BERTIE (*beginning*). Freda!

FREDA. Yes?

BERTIE. What about it? I should like to be married to you—tremendously.

FREDA. Nice person.

BERTIE. Would you care about it at all?

FREDA. Terribly.

BERTIE. I think your Father and Mother would like the idea. I don't know if that matters nowadays.

FREDA. My dear Bertie, of course it does. Family quarrels are so vulgar—besides upsetting things. I want you to get on.

BERTIE. Quite. . . . Then that's all right.

FREDA. Yes, that's all right.

BERTIE. Do we celebrate it in the usual way ?

FREDA. Well, we shall have to begin some time.

(*Kissing him*) Dear Bertie !

BERTIE (*rather moved*). Thank you. I'll try not to let you down.

(*LADY JANE comes in. BERTIE, full of apologetic noises, struggles to get up.*)

FREDA (*calmly*). Subterfuge is useless, Bertie. (*She gets off his knee*) Bertie has just asked me to marry him, Mother.

LADY JANE (*delighted*). My dear Bertie ! How—(*she seeks for the right word*)—how satisfactory ! (*She holds out her hand, which he kisses*) I am so glad. (*To FREDA*) Dear child ! (*She puts up a cheek.*)

FREDA. Tell her about your Uncle Joseph.

BERTIE. He died, you know, the other day.

LADY JANE. Not unexpectedly, I hope ?

BERTIE. Oh, no ! On the contrary.

LADY JANE. That's a comfort. And—all satisfactory ?

BERTIE. Very.

LADY JANE. You must tell Richard the details. (*To FREDA*) Run along now, dear. Bertie really came here on business, I suspect. (*To him*) Isn't that so ?

FREDA (*holding up a finger*). Now, Bertie, don't say I was just an accident.

BERTIE. A delightful interlude.

FREDA. That's better. But I still think—

LADY JANE. Nonsense, Freda, you know how busy Bertie is.

FREDA. "For men must work, and women must weep. . . ." I shall be weeping upstairs, if you want another interlude before you go.

BERTIE (*opening the door for her*). Rather! Of course I do. (*She goes out. He closes the door and comes quickly to LADY JANE*) I say, what about it? You read the speech, of course.

LADY JANE. Naturally.

BERTIE. The P.M.'s furious.

LADY JANE. That's also natural.

BERTIE. Did you know he was going to? I beg your pardon, I oughtn't to have asked you that.

LADY JANE. I knew what Richard's views were. Naturally.

BERTIE. Well, of course, we all did. (*He takes a turn up and down*) Look here, we had a draft of the speech. Knowing his views, the P.M. insisted on it. That draft merely echoed the policy of the Cabinet. It went no further. I brought it back to Mannock the night before last, and told him that the P.M. approved. He goes down to Leeds, gives 'em the speech, and at the critical point throws over the Cabinet and dashes off on his own. Just as we were afraid he would.

LADY JANE. It won't be difficult to explain that.

BERTIE. So I told the P.M. Naturally he feels that he has been done, Mannock having practically promised him that the other speech was——

LADY JANE (*horrified*). Bertie, you're not suggesting anything against Richard's honour!

BERTIE (*equally horrified*). Good Lord, of course I'm not!

LADY JANE. But is the Prime Minister?

BERTIE (*apologetically*). You must make allowances for him. You see, he's just getting over influenza. When

he's quite strong again, he'll see that it's ridiculous to talk about honour—it's just a question of tactics. But at present—well, you know how you feel after influenza.

LADY JANE (*in the voice of one who knows the explanation by heart*). It's perfectly simple. Richard made a private memorandum of his own views, which he intended to lay before the Cabinet. Accidentally, owing to some carelessness of his secretary, this must have been included in the first draft of the speech. When it was discovered, the speech was typed out afresh and sent to the Prime Minister. Richard, again owing to some carelessness, took the earlier draft to Leeds.

BERTIE (*also knowing it by heart*). Quite, quite.

LADY JANE. Richard will tell us what happened then. He may have found himself in the middle of it before he realised that he had the wrong draft, and have been carried away. Or he may have thought that this was the draft which had been submitted to the Prime Minister, and that the P.M., though not approving it, had wished a kite to be flown, knowing that he could always repudiate Richard afterwards.

BERTIE. Quite.

LADY JANE. Of course it was careless of Reader. He has been dismissed, by the way.

BERTIE. Quite. Oh, there are plenty of explanations. And if the P.M. had been in normal health—

LADY JANE. What does he want?

BERTIE. Well, he wants an explanation of some kind, and he wants it for the Press. And he wants something pretty humble from Mannoek personally. And he wants to smoke very badly and can't, because of his throat—that's really what's worrying him.

LADY JANE. Oh! . . . Oh, well! . . . Who's going to the Admiralty?

BERTIE (*uncomfortably*). Nothing's settled as far as I know. And won't be until he's well again.

LADY JANE. Not even Mowbray?

BERTIE. No. . . .

LADY JANE. Bertie, you're one of the family now. Tell me frankly: is it certain that Mowbray will be Chancellor of the Exchequer?

BERTIE. Nothing is certain.

LADY JANE. Oh! Well, that's something. (*After a pause*) Has Leeds done Richard any harm?

BERTIE. At the moment, yes, certainly. Ultimately, I should say, no.

LADY JANE. He's played the wrong card?

BERTIE. I think so. But you never know. The P.M.'s queer in some ways. And it depends a little on how the Press takes it up. They were very non-committal this morning.

LADY JANE. In the circumstances, to be non-committal is to be on our side.

BERTIE. Quite. . . . (*Looking at his watch*) But where is he, where is he? What's all this about walking home?

LADY JANE. Walking home? What do you mean?

BERTIE. Why, Digby said—— (*and now MANNOCK comes in*) Ah!

MANNOCK (*cheerfully*). Hullo, Bertie. Digby told me you were here. (*To his wife*) Ah, you've been looking after him. That's good. (*He is younger than when we first saw him, more eager.*)

BERTIE. We wondered what had happened to you.

MANNOCK. I sent the car on and walked. It was such a jolly afternoon.

LADY JANE. Walked! From Euston? (*She looks at him in amazement.*)

MANNOCK. Yes. Such a jolly afternoon.

LADY JANE. Oh! . . . (*Before words come to her, she decides that, after all, it doesn't matter very much.*) Bertie has come round about the speech.

MANNOCK (*at a loss*). Speech?

LADY JANE. He thinks it was a mistake in tactics, as it turns out.

BERTIE. Yes, but there's more to it than that. The P.M.—

MANNOCK. Oh, the speech! Oh, I see.

LADY JANE. I was telling him that that could easily be explained.

BERTIE. Quite.

LADY JANE. He thinks—oh, by the way, we may regard Bertie as one of the family now. Freda—

BERTIE. Please.

LADY JANE. Freda—

MANNOCK. Freda and Bertie?

LADY JANE. Yes. I have told Bertie how delighted we are.

MANNOCK (*violently*). No! I won't have it!

LADY JANE (*amazed*). Richard!

BERTIE (*equally amazed*). Why, what—

MANNOCK (*recovering himself with an effort*). I beg your pardon.

LADY JANE. But I don't understand. Only the other day—

MANNOCK. I want Freda to marry for love . . . I'm sorry, Bertie. Perhaps she does love you.

BERTIE (*embarrassed*). Well, I—I don't understand. I asked her to marry me, and she—apparently she—

MANNOCK. Are you in love with *her*?

BERTIE (*out of his depth*). Well, I—I asked her to marry me, and— Yes, of course I am. I mean— (*bewildered*) I don't understand.

MANNOCK. Good God, man, you must know if you're in love or not.

LADY JANE (*interposing firmly*). Bertie, perhaps you wouldn't mind fetching Freda.

BERTIE (*relieved*). Right. [*He goes out.*]

LADY JANE. Thank you . . . Richard, what's the matter? What has happened?

(MANNOCK *takes a turn up the room, wondering how much to tell her, when to tell her.*)

MANNOCK (*looking up suddenly*). Do you mean about Freda?

LADY JANE. Why this sudden change? Two nights ago we were both saying—

MANNOCK. That's just it. I want to be sure that she is not doing it just because she thinks we want it.

LADY JANE. I probably know Freda better than you—

MANNOCK. I don't know her at all.

LADY JANE. Then you may take my word for it that, if she marries anybody, it will be because she wants to do so.

MANNOCK (*thoughtfully*). Yes, I suppose so. (*With a laugh to himself*) After all, it hasn't really very much to do with me—now.

LADY JANE. Naturally we both want her to be happy. Bertie has come into money, he tells me. I suppose he was waiting for that. I think it's the most satisfactory thing that could have happened.

MANNOCK (*thoughtfully*). Yes, I'm not sure that it isn't.

LADY JANE. Well, then!

MANNOCK. Yes. . . . (*To himself*) God, how difficult it all is, when you get close to it.

LADY JANE. All what?

MANNOCK (*waving his hands*). Life. Everything.

(*Before LADY JANE can take his temperature, BERTIE and FREDa come in.*)

FREDA. What is it ?

MANNOCK. Come here, Freda. (*She comes to him, looking up into his face*) Fond of Bertie ?

FREDA (*smiling*). I've adored him for years.

MANNOCK. Going to be happy with him ?

FREDA. I hope so.

MANNOCK (*kissing her forehead*). Well, good luck to you both. (*Shaking Bertie's hand*) Good luck to you, Bertie.

LADY JANE. I think Freda is a very lucky girl. Bertie has a wonderful career in front of him.

BERTIE (*modestly*). Well, I hope——

FREDA. Oh, Bertie's all right.

MANNOCK (*with a note of dismissal*). All right, Freda. I just wanted to feel quite sure—— That's all right, Bertie.

[BERTIE opens the door for FREDA, who goes out.

LADY JANE. Now then, tell Richard just what you were telling me. (*She sits down for it.*)

BERTIE (*coming back to them*). Well, what it really comes to——

MANNOCK (*smiling to himself happily*). I have sent in my resignation to the Prime Minister.

LADY JANE. Richard ! Is that wise ? At this moment ? (*She turns to Bertie for help*) Bertie ?

BERTIE (*shaking his head*). He's in the mood to accept it. You can't hold a pistol to his head just now.

LADY JANE. That's what I felt. (*Anxiously to her husband*) Has the letter gone ?

MANNOCK. It has gone.

BERTIE. Good Lord !

LADY JANE. Is it too late ? (*To BERTIE*) Can't you——

MANNOCK (*patiently*). I have resigned. He will accept my resignation. He can't help himself. Well, I intend him to. That's why I resigned.

LADY JANE (*with restraint*). I don't want to—I daresay you know best. But surely it was a matter which should have been discussed first. You must think that it was wise, or you wouldn't have done it. But at least let us hear your reasons. Here are Bertie and I, only too anxious to help.

(MANNOCK looks at her—and at BERTIE. A smile comes on to his face as he imagines himself saying, "Well, the fact is, I am running away with another woman." Impossible, of course, with BERTIE there. Impossible anyhow, yet. He cannot mention SALLY'S name in this atmosphere; cannot hint that there is another woman, for fear of SALLY being identified. Impossible to discuss her, them, the situation, with anybody. Unless it were a friend of SALLY'S. EVERSLEY, perhaps. But he must be out of the Government first. Some such thoughts as these are in his mind, even if we cannot read them.)

MANNOCK. Well, yes, that's reasonable. And yet—it's no good. I can't explain now. Except to say that I'm doing it with my eyes open. (*In a whisper*) At last. (*To LADY JANE*) You must give me a week—then I'll explain everything.

LADY JANE (*uncertain*). Well—of course you know best—

BERTIE (*quite certain*). That's all right, Lady Jane. (*He almost winks at her*) I understand.

LADY JANE. Do you really think—

BERTIE. You never can tell with the P.M. I've said that before. Mannock's way—he has always played

his cards well—there's something up his sleeve—you leave it to him.

(MANNOCK *has wandered away in search of an A.B.C. Trains don't touch that sleepy little village between hills, but they can bring lovers within reach of it. Just to look up the train is something.*)

LADY JANE (*nodding to BERTIE*). Very well. If you think——

BERTIE. He knows what he's doing.

LADY JANE. Very well, Richard. You do it your own way. Meanwhile——

BERTIE. Meanwhile no harm in letting it be known that——

LADY JANE. Important changes in the Cabinet are pending.

BERTIE. Well, yes, *that*——

LADY JANE. I'll ask Roger Coombes to lunch tomorrow, and drop a hint.

BERTIE. Yes. . . . I was going to say that I could let fall a word or two. By the way, perhaps we'd better say nothing about Freda until this is safely over. I should like to be able to preserve my impartiality for what it's worth. A suggestion that, from what I have seen of Mannock lately, he is tired of the confinements of his present office——

LADY JANE. And that a post of greater freedom——

BERTIE. And more responsibility—exactly. (*Chuckling*) Otherwise he seriously thinks of retiring from public life altogether.

LADY JANE (*laughing at the absurdity of it*). I think that can be safely left to you, Bertie. And you're right about Freda. I hope she hasn't been ringing up all her friends. I'd better see about that at once.

BERTIE. I'll come along too. Well, so long, Mannock.

MANNOCK (*who was just stepping out of the train*).
Going?

BERTIE. You'll be seeing some more of me before very long, I expect. (*With sudden enthusiasm*) By Jove, if you play this hand properly, I believe—well, almost anything might happen.

MANNOCK (*happily*). I believe it might, Bertie.

[LADY JANE and BERTIE go out.

(MANNOCK, *with the A.B.C. in his hands, is back in the train with SALLY. . . . This time it is READER who interrupts them.*)

READER. Are you busy, sir?

MANNOCK (*looking up*). No . . . no.

READER (*formally*). I gather, from what I have read in the papers, that I accidentally gave you the wrong draft of the speech. It was very careless of me, and I wish to express my regret.

MANNOCK (*smiling*). *Very* careless of you, Reader.

READER (*his first smile in MANNOCK'S house*). I thought I had better mention it.

MANNOCK. Thank you. . . . But we are not bothering about that now.

READER. Oh?

MANNOCK. No. Life has other things to offer than speeches at Leeds. . . . (*Suddenly remembering*) By the way, what were you trying to tell me about Mrs. Reader the other day?

READER (*distressed*). I oughtn't to have—it was only in the shock of your—

MANNOCK (*smiling*). Yes, never mind all that. I should like to know, if you would like to tell me.

READER (*awkwardly, after a pause*). She—we—we're going to have a baby.

MANNOCK. Ah! . . . The first? (READER *nods*)
Frightened? (READER *nods again*.)

READER (*suddenly*). I—I do love her so.

MANNOCK (*gently*). How long have you been married ?

READER. Ten years. . . . It's like yesterday.

MANNOCK (*moved*). Yes. . . . Oh, before I forget, I'd better write to Carfax. I know he wants somebody. (*He goes to his desk*) Sit down, won't you ?

READER. Thank you very much. It's very kind of you. You see, I haven't liked to tell her yet—

MANNOCK (*writing*). Well, don't, until we've got this fixed up.

READER. No.

MANNOCK. I daresay Carfax will stand for another fifty, if he's sure he's getting the right man. Then that will be a pleasant surprise for her.

READER (*thawing*). I am afraid she won't look at it quite like that. You see, she is—if I may say so—very much interested in you. In your career. She will be sorry to. . . . You see, we often talk about you in the evenings. We wonder what you are going to do. Having no career of our own, so to speak—

MANNOCK (*writing*). No career of your own. Lucky man !

READER. We find our interest in following yours. I believe that if I could go home to-morrow and tell my wife—before it got into the papers, you understand—that you were to be the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, she would be as happy and excited as if it had happened to me.

MANNOCK (*with a laugh for the vanity of these things*) Chancellor of the Exchequer, eh ? (*Shaking his head*) No, Reader, no.

READER. Well, that's as may be. . . . (*Enthusiastically*) To be Chancellor of the Exchequer ! Think of the power it gives you ! To know that there isn't a house in the whole country which isn't waiting for *your*

decision—from the tiniest cottage to the hugest castle ! Not a family that won't be affected ! It must be wonderful. The power of affecting all those people ! It has always seemed to me the supreme goal for any man to reach. (*Apologetically*) Sometimes we have pretended—only in play, you understand—that it was I who had reached it . . . we have wondered . . . the power it gives you . . . (*he sees himself there, Ethel with him*)—we have talked over what we should do—

(*And MANNOCK has been seeing himself there too. Just for a moment he has been there.*)

MANNOCK (*with a sigh*). Yes. . . . (*Then he is back with SALLY again. Gently he says*) But there is something better than that. Something. . . . (*You can see him thinking of it, smiling. . . . But now his thoughts have changed ; the smile gives place to a frown. The career is fighting its way back into his mind. Fighting with SALLY. He jerks his head round at READER, READER who is tempting him, and says sharply*) Chancellor of the Exchequer, eh ? No, Reader, no. (*Returning to the letter*) I shan't be a moment.

ACT III

SCENE 2 : *Cavendish Square.* MANNOCK'S *library.*

It is afternoon, two days later. MANNOCK *is alone, restlessly doing nothing.* ARTHUR *comes in.*

ARTHUR. Busy ?

MANNOCK (*looking up*). No . . . no.

ARTHUR. Thought I'd say good-bye. I'm just off.

MANNOCK. Off ?

ARTHUR. Yes, that's right, isn't it ? You said you didn't want me till the end of the month.

MANNOCK (*remembering*). Oh ! . . . Oh, yes. (*He remembers that now he won't want ARTHUR at all*) Yes. (*With an effort*) What are you going to do ?

ARTHUR. Going to Marjory's for a week. Then down to Cornwall for a little golf.

MANNOCK (*remembering his elder daughter*). Marjory. . . . Yes. (*How complicated life is !*)

ARTHUR. Any messages for any of them ?

MANNOCK. Yes—no. I'll write. (*To himself*) Yes, I shall have to write to Marjory.

ARTHUR. Right. Then if I'm back by the 30th, that will do ?

MANNOCK (*after a silence*). Arthur !

ARTHUR. Yes ?

MANNOCK. I've sent in my resignation.

ARTHUR. Your resignation ? Why ? Oh, I see.

The old resignation stunt. Hasn't that been rather overdone ?

MANNOCK. You don't understand, Arthur——

ARTHUR. All these political tactics—there's something so tawdry about them, so shoddy, so—— Sorry, Father, I was forgetting. I'm a neutral now. Well, I suppose I shall get used to them.

MANNOCK. I say again, I have resigned my seat in the Cabinet.

ARTHUR (*with a smile*). If you're not careful, the P.M. will accept it, and then where will you be ?

MANNOCK (*sharply*). Out of the Cabinet, which is where I want to be.

ARTHUR. Not really ? Why ? (MANNOCK *shrugs his shoulders*.) No, but why, Father ?

MANNOCK. I'm tired of it. I want to get out of it all.

ARTHUR (*eagerly*). I say ! You're not crossing over, are you ? How terribly sporting of you !

MANNOCK (*firmly*). I'm giving up politics altogether.

ARTHUR (*his jaw falling*). Giving up—— ? Then what about me ?

MANNOCK. That's been worrying me.

ARTHUR. Worrying you ! I should think it had ! You made me chuck a jolly good job to come to *you*, and then when it's been filled up by somebody else——

MANNOCK. Are you sure ? I hoped that perhaps——

ARTHUR (*shaking his head gravely*). I say, Father, this really is a bit steep.

MANNOCK (*humbly*). I'm very sorry, Arthur. I'm to blame. I never ought to have persuaded you to come to me. It was your career to choose for yourself. I'm sorry.

ARTHUR (*still aggrieved*). You practically ruin a man's life——

MANNOCK (*smiling sadly*). Twenty-two, aren't you ?

No man's life is ruined at twenty-two. (*With sudden emotion*) Oh, my God, to be twenty-two again!

ARTHUR. Well, but I mean——

MANNOCK. Arthur, forget all that I've said to you, will you, just for a week? Enjoy yourself at Marjory's, don't say anything to her about it, and I'll write to you. I can't talk about it now—not for another week. Will you do that for me?

ARTHUR (*reluctantly*). Oh, all right. (*Looking thoughtfully at his father*) You know, I believe it *is* a stunt, after all. A super-stunt. I don't know what the game is——

[*Enter DIGBY.*]

DIGBY. Mr. Eversley is here, sir.

MANNOCK. Yes, that's right, Digby. Show him in here.

ARTHUR (*to DIGBY*). Is the car here?

DIGBY. Yes, sir.

[*He goes out.*]

ARTHUR. Then I'll be getting on. (*Holding out his hand*) Good-bye, Father—and I'll wait for your letter.

MANNOCK. Yes. (*Taking his hand*) Good-bye, Arthur. (*When will he see him again?*) Good-bye, old boy. Good luck to you always.

ARTHUR (*a little surprised*). Thanks! [*He goes out.*]

(MANNOCK *walks up and down, thinking, thinking. How difficult it all is! . . . Then DIGBY announces EVERSOLEY.*)

DIGBY. Mr. Eversley.

MANNOCK (*eagerly*). I knew you would come. (*To DIGBY, who still waits*) What is it? (*DIGBY presents a letter*) Oh, put it down. (*DIGBY walks across to the writing-desk and places the letter there*) Were you in London, or did I drag you up from the country? I had to see you. [*DIGBY goes out.*]

EVERSOLEY. Well, I *was* at home, but of course I was only too glad to come up, if you wanted me.

MANNOCK (*looking at him fondly*) I never ought to have let you go, Teddy. I ought always to have kept you with me.

EVERSLEY (*happy at the "Teddy"*). And what should I have been doing all the time?

MANNOCK (*settling him in a chair*). Nothing. Just admiring me. What else is a Squier for?

EVERSLEY. What else? The world is full of Nites and Squiers—the admired and the admiring. I wonder which are the happier?

MANNOCK (*gently*). The loved and the loving.

EVERSLEY. Yes. Which are the happier, Dick?

MANNOCK (*suddenly, after a little silence*). Got your pipe with you? (EVERSLEY *nods*.) Well, fill it, then.

EVERSLEY (*taking it out*). It is filled.

MANNOCK. Well, light it, then.

EVERSLEY (*lighting it*). There! (*He smokes*.)

MANNOCK. Teddy, I'm giving it all up.

EVERSLEY. All what?

MANNOCK. Everything. Politics. My career. My successful career.

EVERSLEY (*smoking placidly*). Any particular reason?

(MANNOCK *looks at him, and hesitates. Then he gives reasons—but not the particular reason.*)

MANNOCK. It's odd how wrapped up in my career I have been. I never saw it from outside. I've been looking at it lately. I think it was you—that other night—who made me struggle outside and look at it. You were the first. That was the beginning of it.

EVERSLEY. I had no idea I was precipitating a political crisis. What did I say?

MANNOCK. You said "And then success closed in on you."

EVERSLEY. Yes, I remember. But I apologised for it.

MANNOCK. It's a stifling thing, success. It shuts out

so much. (*Gently*) All the lovely things, all the precious things . . . I've been looking back at my career. After all, he's in a position of trust, a Cabinet Minister. He is responsible for the happiness of the people, his fellow countrymen and women. How often have I thought of their happiness? How often of my personal triumph—my success? What are all our intrigues for, our strategy, our tactics? To improve the condition of England? Or to improve our personal position? I look back on my career, and never once can I say, "He did that for others."

EVERSLEY. The others are no better.

MANNOCK. That isn't a very proud thought for—

EVERSLEY. For a Dreadnought Nite?

MANNOCK. Don't! . . . Oh, my God, to be twenty-two again!

EVERSLEY. What would you do?

MANNOCK. Live. There is so much that I have missed. All the lovely things of life. But, perhaps, even now, it isn't too late.

EVERSLEY (*after smoking in silence for a little*). And so you're giving it all up?

MANNOCK. Yes. This is between ourselves, of course, until it is made public.

EVERSLEY. Of course. . . . It's a big career to give up, as the world judges it.

MANNOCK (*a little vain of his sacrifice*). I suppose it is.

EVERSLEY. They were talking politics in the train—as they always do—and one or two of them were saying that you ought to be the new Chancellor of the Exchequer.

MANNOCK (*pleased*). Oh? Oh, but I shouldn't have been anyhow. Mowbray.

EVERSLEY. They didn't seem to think very much of Mowbray.

MANNOCK. He's the obvious man.

EVERSLEY. A little too obvious, they felt. . . .

MANNOCK (*after a pause*). It was my one ambition in the old days.

EVERSLEY (*smiling*). Not such very old days.

MANNOCK (*a little annoyed*). You know what I mean . . . I wanted to be that, even more than to be Prime Minister. It fascinated me.

EVERSLEY. It would terrify *me*.

MANNOCK. I think I've only realised lately how much I wanted it; how certain I was I could be one of the Great Ones. . . . It may never come now. (*Remembering suddenly*) Well, of course *now* it never will—obviously. (*He sighs*) I'm well out of it all. But even if—I mean Mowbray—well, he'll last this Government—and after the next Election, who knows? (*He is thoughtful.*)

EVERSLEY. And what are you going to do when you retire?

MANNOCK. Teddy, you do think I'm right, don't you?

EVERSLEY. Well, I don't quite know all the circumstances, do I?

MANNOCK. I must have *you* on my side. Everybody here—well, naturally—

EVERSLEY. They think you're mad? They've sent for the doctor?

MANNOCK. They simply don't believe it. But *you*—you're not prejudiced—*you* think——?

EVERSLEY. Aren't I prejudiced?

MANNOCK. You?

EVERSLEY (*through clouds of smoke*). I had a friend once. I lived with him, played with him, made plans with him, for—how many years? I was fond of him, Dick. I don't think he knew how fond we were of him, Sally and I; two of the admiring ones, the loving ones; yes, the happier ones. Then I lost him . . .

and more than twenty years afterwards I found him again. And he was dead. Now you say that he is coming to life again, and you ask me to tell you—quite without prejudice—whether I should like him to come to life again. . . . It is a little difficult for me, Dick, to be quite unprejudiced.

MANNOCK (*remorsefully*). Teddy!

EVERSLEY (*a little wistfully*). But—I *should* like to find him again, you know. Just to talk to him about those—rather jolly days.

MANNOCK. They *were* good days.

EVERSLEY. Perhaps we didn't realise at the time how good they were.

MANNOCK. Do you remember—(*he breaks off impetuously*) Oh, Teddy, there are a hundred things I want to talk to you about, a hundred things I want to tell you.

EVERSLEY. Well, that's why I came.

MANNOCK. I know. (*Suddenly*) Teddy! I—(*and then he pulls himself up*) No, I can't tell you now. Not here. I must see you—where can I see you? Not in this house. Where can I see you, where can we really talk?

EVERSLEY. Couldn't we dine together somewhere?

MANNOCK. Yes, that's it. Somewhere where we can be by ourselves. Now, let me think—

EVERSLEY. "The Cock," in Fleet Street? Not many people there in the evening.

MANNOCK. That will do. . . . I wonder what you'll think. . . . But I can't tell you here. . . . I'll call for you. Where are you staying? Your club?

EVERSLEY. I am staying with friends. At Porchester Terrace. But they don't expect me to dinner.

MANNOCK. Then I'll call for you at a quarter to eight. What number? You'd better write it down. (EVERSLEY *takes out a card*) Got a pencil?

EVERSLEY (*feeling in his pockets*). Somewhere.

MANNOCK (*going to the desk*). Here you are. (*And then he sees the letter and stops short.*)

EVERSLEY (*finding his own*). It's all right. (*He writes the address.*)

(*MANNOCK gazes at the letter. This is from the Prime Minister—to accept his resignation. So his career is over. He stands there, letter in hand, breathing heavily as if he had been running. EVERSLEY looks at him in surprise.*)

MANNOCK. When did this—

EVERSLEY. What is it?

MANNOCK (*turning, letter in hand*). How long—

EVERSLEY. Your butler brought it in, didn't he, when he brought me in?

MANNOCK. Yes, of course.

EVERSLEY. Don't mind me, Dick, if it's important.

MANNOCK. No, no, it's nothing. I—

(*LADY JANE comes in, followed by BERTIE. They are obviously excited.*)

LADY JANE (*eagerly*). Richard! (*She sees EVERSLEY*) Oh, I—(*coldly*) Oh, how do you do, Mr. Eversley?

EVERSLEY. How do you do, Lady Jane? I was just going. (*He and BERTIE nod to each other*) Well, good-bye, Dick. (*Giving him the card*) Here's the address. And a quarter to eight?

MANNOCK (*mechanically*). Yes, yes. Good-bye. (*He rings the bell, and puts down the card.*)

EVERSLEY (*to LADY JANE*). Good-bye. (*To BERTIE*) Good-bye. (*BERTIE nods.*)

LADY JANE (*with an effort*). Oh, but we mustn't drive you away like this.

EVERSLEY (*smiling pleasantly*). But I really was going. Good-bye.

LADY JANE. Good-bye.

[DIGBY *is there to show him out. He goes.*
(*All this time MANNOCK has been standing with the unopened letter in his hands, fingering the envelope.*)

LADY JANE (*in suppressed excitement*). Richard! Bertie says. . . . Why, what's that? (*She is looking at the letter*) But that's—why don't you open it? That's the letter. Open it! Open it!

MANNOCK (*dully*). This is just acknowledging and accepting my resignation.

LADY JANE. But have you opened it yet? (*She snatches it from him, looks at it, and gives it back to him*) But you haven't opened it yet! Open it! Bertie says—

BERTIE. The omens are distinctly favourable. But—well, now we shall know.

MANNOCK (*opening it*). It's only just to accept my resignation. (*He reads. You can see at once that it is not that.*)

LADY JANE (*watching his face*). It is! MANNOCK *looks in front of him, seeing visions*) May I—(*she takes the letter from him*) I must. (*She reads*) Oh, well done, Richard!

(MANNOCK *stands there, breathing heavily. To be Chancellor of the Exchequer!*)

BERTIE. He has? (*She nods*) By Jove! Congratulations!

LADY JANE. I never thought—

BERTIE. Well, I don't know. Mowbray has a good deal against him one way and another.

LADY JANE. Yes. But I was almost afraid to hope.

BERTIE (*proudly*). Didn't I tell you to leave it to him? (*He nods towards MANNOCK.*)

LADY JANE. Yes, you were quite right, Bertie. (*She looks admiringly at her husband.*)

BERTIE. Of course, I know all about the resignation stunt—it's as old as the hills. But if you can do it with conviction, you can still pull it off sometimes.

LADY JANE. Yes, yes.

BERTIE. Mannoek carried conviction—that's where he's such an artist. The P.M. really thought he was going. Didn't dare to lose him. Prepared to offer anything to keep him.

LADY JANE. Yes.

BERTIE. I've always said that, in the matter of political strategy, Mannoek can give them all points. Even the P.M. I knew he'd pull it off.

LADY JANE. Richard! (*She means "Come and talk to us."*)

MANNOCK (*his control suddenly giving way*). So you knew I'd pull it off? (*He is almost shouting.*)

BERTIE. Rather!

MANNOCK. I can give 'em all points in political strategy?

BERTIE. I've always said so.

MANNOCK. And I carry conviction—eh?—that's where I'm such an artist.

BERTIE. Exactly. (*MANNOCK gives a loud, bitter laugh.*) Well, I mean—

MANNOCK (*half hysterically*). An artist! That's what I am. Carry conviction! I carried conviction all right. I pulled *your* leg pretty well, Bertie. (*To LADY JANE*) And yours. You thought I meant to resign—yes, you did, both of you—you thought I meant it—you were frightened to death, yes, you were. You thought I really meant to give it all up. So did Arthur. I had Arthur in here just now—frightened to death—thought I meant to give it all up—talked about *his*

career—his career!—my God!—frightened to death he was, just like you two. Ha! I pulled your legs pretty well. Resign? Why the devil should I resign? Haven't I got what I always wanted? You ask Reader—he'll tell you—the supreme goal for any man to reach. Chancellor of the Exchequer—that gives you power. Me! I've done it! Just pure strategy. Pretending I wanted to give up politics. Why should I? Success—it closes in on you! My God, there's nothing I can't do! Nothing! (*His voice rises almost to a shriek, as he drops into a chair, and sits there, his hands over his face, his shoulders shaking with long, tearless sobs.*)

BERTIE (*soothingly*). I say, old fellow—

LADY JANE (*quietly*). No. Go, Bertie.

BERTIE. Oh, right. (*Going*) I'll come in this evening if I can. He'll be all right? (*She nods.*) Right.

[*He goes out.*]

LADY JANE (*putting an arm calmly on MANNOCK'S shoulders*). It's all right now, Richard. I know how you must feel. It has been a very anxious time for both of us. But it's all over now. You've got what you wanted. I'm proud of you, very proud of you.

MANNOCK (*pulling himself together*). I'm sorry. I—

LADY JANE (*calmly*). It's all right. I understand perfectly. The strain—naturally.

MANNOCK. Yes.

LADY JANE. I'll leave you now. You'll want to be alone. But come and talk to me afterwards.

MANNOCK (*nodding*). Yes.

LADY JANE (*giving him the letter*). You'll want to answer this.

MANNOCK. Yes. Thank you.

LADY JANE (*looking at him admiringly*). I'm very proud of you, Richard.

[*She goes out.*]

(*Alone, MANNOCK walks slowly to his desk, a tired*

man. There, he sees EVERSLEY'S card, picks it up, looks at it, puts it down, and takes up the telephone.)

MANNOCK (*at the telephone*). Hullo! Come in, will you? (*He goes back to his chair and waits. READER comes in, note-book in hand.*) I want a telegram sent at once. To Mr. Eversley. You'll find a card on my desk. (*READER goes there*) Got it? With an address in Porchester Terrace.

READER. Yes, sir. (*He writes down the name and address and waits.*)

MANNOCK. "Afraid cannot dine to-night."

READER (*writing*). "Afraid cannot dine to-night."

MANNOCK. That's all.

READER. Signed?

MANNOCK. Yes, "Dick." . . . (*An end to this weakness. He corrects himself firmly*) No—Mannock.

READER. "Afraid cannot dine to-night. Mannock." . . . Anything else, sir?

MANNOCK. No. . . . Yes. . . . Yes. . . . (*READER waits*) Another telegram.

READER (*waiting*). Yes?

MANNOCK. Lady Carchester, Enderways, Riley, Yorkshire.

READER (*murmuring to himself*). Enderways, Riley, R-I-L-E-Y?

MANNOCK. Yes.

READER. Yorkshire. (*He waits*).

MANNOCK (*after a long pause*). "I beg your pardon." (*READER says nothing. MANNOCK looks up*) That's all.

READER. Oh, I beg—I see—I didn't understand. (*Writing*) "I beg your pardon."

MANNOCK. We had a—a discussion. I—I was wrong. I have found out since that I was wrong. This is— (*he shrugs*).

READER (*pleasantly*). A very graceful way of saying so, if I may be allowed—

MANNOCK (*to himself*). Graceful!

READER (*after waiting*). Signed? Or will she understand?

MANNOCK. She will understand. (*To himself, ashamed*)
I think she will understand. . . . All right, Reader.

[READER goes out.

(MANNOCK *walks slowly to his desk. For a little while he sits there, holding the letter in his hand. . . .*

SALLY *is dead. He has killed her. No good explaining, apologising, whining, to a person whom you have killed. Let him be man enough to spare her that last insult. No, there's nothing to say. It was EVERSLEY and that damned tune that got into a man's head, and made him dream. . . . The sweetness of her in his dream! But that was twenty-five years ago. They're dead now; both dead. . . . But—Chancellor of the Exchequer! It will be in all the papers to-morrow. Chancellor of the Exchequer! What will the papers say? What will people say? Everybody will see it. . . . Sally will see it. Will know, will understand. No, there's nothing to be said. That damned tune, that damned dream. O Sally, Sally, Sally! Don't! Don't come into my dreams again. . . .*

So for a little he sits, thinking. Then, with a bitter, contemptuous laugh, he tosses away his thoughts and comes back to the letter. Chancellor of the Exchequer! Briskly he dips his pen into the ink, and writes to the Prime Minister.)

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